The Original Custom Bike Magazine

BACK STREET HEROES

JAN 2025
ISSUE #489

THE 101 RUN

CASSINGTON BIKE NIGHT

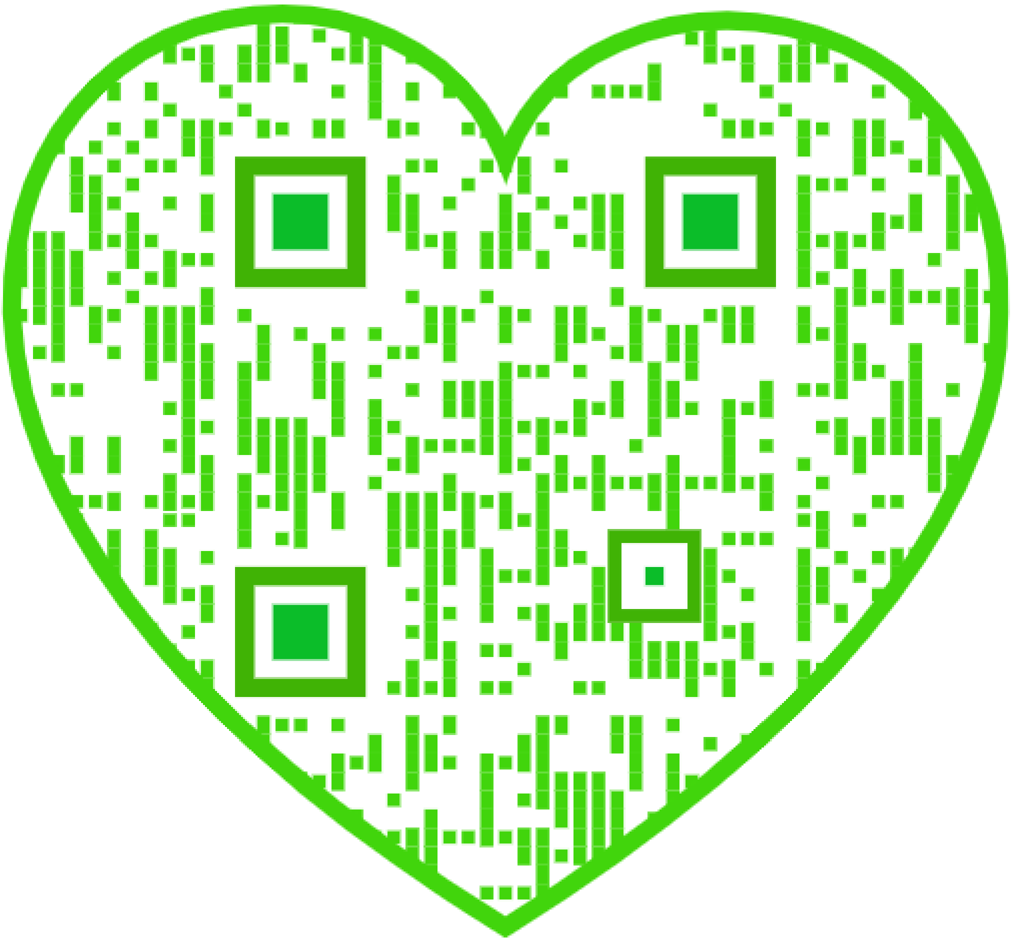
MPH VINTAGE SPRINT

LEAF-SPRING HONDIAN

HOSSACK-FORK CHOP

MORTONS

SHOVELHEAD | TDM850 CHOP | BSA BOBBER



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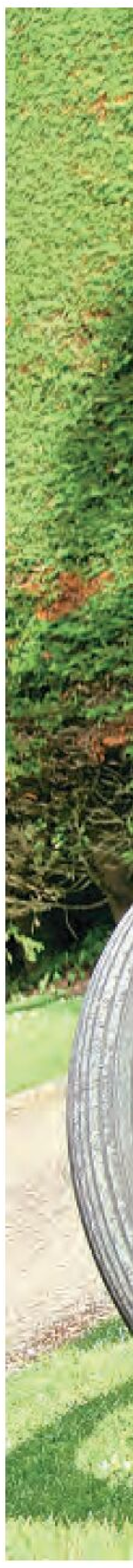

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Editorial

Hello, and welcome to this festive season issue of BSH (although it seems the festive season starts these days in October, doesn’t it, if not earlier?) – the last of 2024 (despite what it says on the cover).

Looking back, y’know, at 2024, I don’t think it was too bad a year. Over ’ere in the east, the weather’s not been as warm as I might’ve liked, granted, but it’s been drier for a lot longer than it’s been wet, and we haven’t had anything even remotely close to the flooding that large parts of the country suffered, despite the fact that this part o’ the land’s largely reclaimed from the sea by the use, back in centuries past, of large Dutch dykes (stop it…) so we’re, allegedly, most at risk of flooding. Thankfully, though, not this year. A lot of bike events were struck by the rain, I know, but I still think I was dry way more often than I was wet, and that’s always a good thing.

Biking-wise, it was… um, an ‘interesting’ year – not quite as in the old Chinese curse sense of the word, but not far off. For example, 2024, it seems, was probably quite a good year to buy a bike, but not so to sell one; social media, and the real world, too, was full of stories of people being unable to sell their machines, no matter how good. The reasons for this were, I think, two-fold. Firstly, the rising cost of living, still accelerating from the electricity etm. hikes last year were, and still are, making people a little wary of putting their ’ands in their pockets, and then, almost from the start of ’24, there was the prospect of the shower-of-shite that was the Conservative Government calling a General Election they were very unlikely to win making people uneasy, too – mostly because the forecasted winners, Labour, didn’t appear to have any firmer a grip on the tiller than the lot they’d be replacing, although they did appear to be marginally less corrupt. Sure enough, when the votes were counted in July, Sunak and his cronies were out (thank fcuk), and Starmer and his were in and, almost immediately, they hoofed themselves squarely in the cods, goodwill-wise, by announcing they were doing away with winter fuel payments for the elderly – not a great start. I do feel for Labour, I have to admit, though I’m not really a supporter – the Tories’d left the country in such a bloody mess that, whatever they’re going to have to do to try and deal with it, they’re almost certainly on to a loser – a kind o’ ‘damned if you do, damned if you don’t’ situation, but they really didn’t help themselves, did they? All this uncertainty, and the Prime Minister’s warning that things’re going to get worse before they get better, has meant that people’re still reluctant to spend, and I can’t see that changing any time soon, sadly.

(Pic from the Rock & Blues by Lauren)

The knock-on from this meant that us lot, as bikers (traditionally not the most affluent of social groups), had to watch our pennies when it came to which events we went to, too. Most weekend-long rallies were down on numbers but, conversely, the numbers at bike nights, especially ones you don’t have to pay to attend, went way up. I have mixed feelings about this. Personally, I’m not as keen on rallies as I once was – I started going to ’em when I was about nineteen, and in the ’90s while working for this magazine in me first stint, did 35-plus a year for a number of years. I’m now not 19 any more, and sleeping in a tent doesn’t appeal to me much any longer, and I’d rather, these days, go to things that I can rock up to on me bike, enjoy for a few hours, and then go home from. That, or ones I can go to either in, or with, a van so that I can kip up off the ground and, I think, an increasing number of folk out there’d agree with me, given that even the most rabid of ‘bikes only!’ events’re now happy to issue van/camper passes. I did do a few choice weekenders this summer, and thoroughly enjoyed ’em all, and’ll be back at them, and others, in ’25, and am already planning for what I’m going to do and where I’m going to go as soon as the spring gets ’ere, and I no longer have to wear a wooly ’at and fingerless gloves at me desk.

It’s funny, reading back through the above, it does sound quite negative, doesn’t it, and I really don’t mean it to be – I did really enjoy 2024, and thinking about stuff that me and Pam, and me and mates, did makes me smile… ’Earoling along on shouty-exhaust Jap Fours; pottering along country lanes on mid-range singles and twins; waking up early to watch the sun rise over misty camping fields; nights spent round campfires drinking (too much) and talking (too much) bollox… yeah, it was a good ’un, I reckon. Here’s to more of the same in 2025.

Merry Christmas, see you next month!

NIK

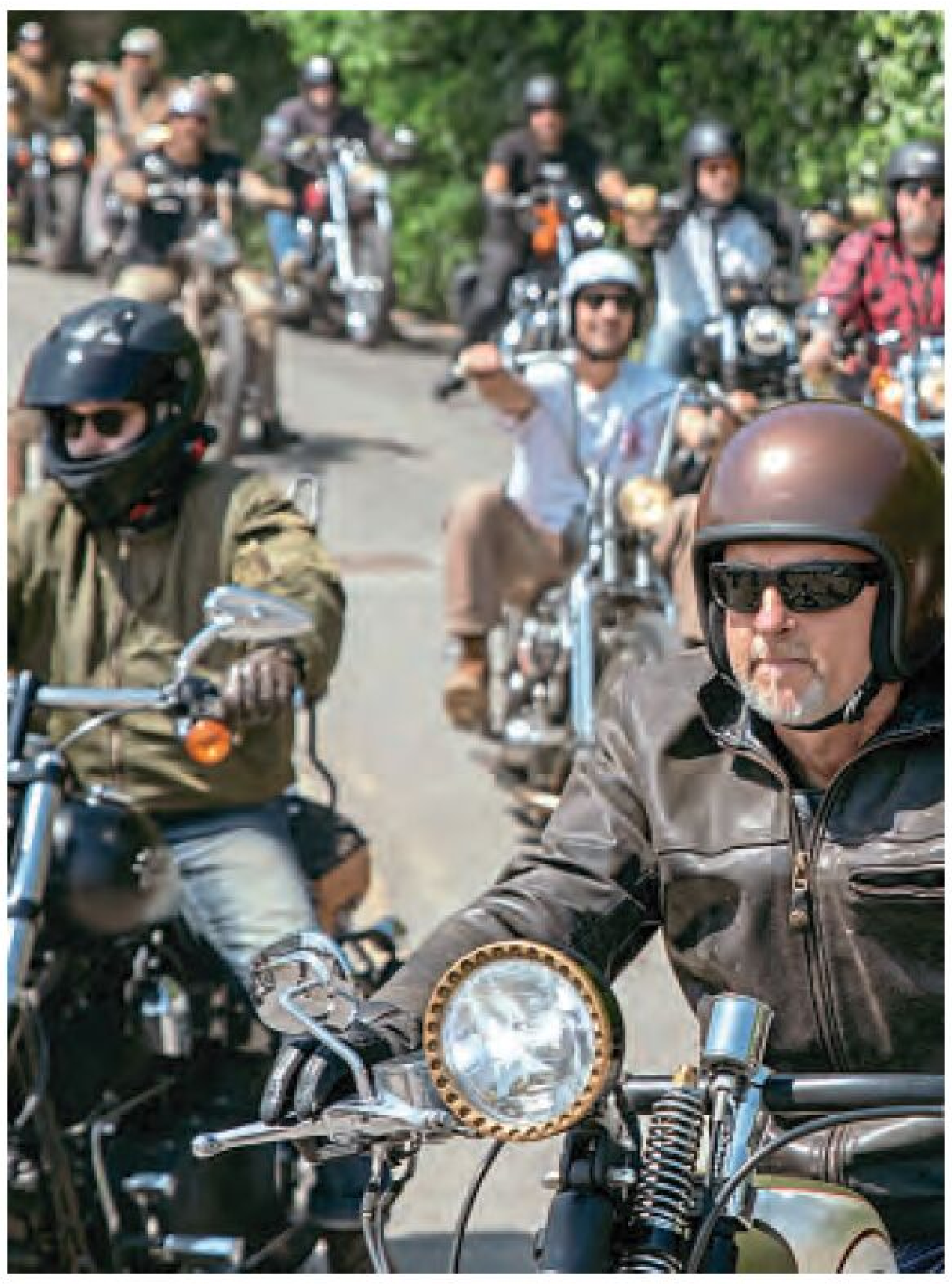
Event

THE 101 RUN

THE 101 RUN IS ORGANISED BY SCOTT WALKER FROM DICE MAGAZINE, AND'S BEEN RUNNING FOR A COUPLE OF YEARS. "WE HAD A BLAST IN 2022 AND 2023, SO WE'RE BACK AGAIN TO TAKE OVER MARGATE, AND HAVE A RIGHT LAUGH."

01-RUN
ELTER
155 YUN

KRAZY HORSE



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101

For this third year it started a day earlier, on Thursday, July 18, with a meet-up at The Old Town Barbers and then, on the Friday, everyone met again at The Albion Rooms at 9am for the pre-ride breakfast before blasting down the coast towards Dover, stopping at a beachside pub in St. Margaret's Bay before returning to The Albion Rooms for the official pre-show party. The main day, you see, is the Saturday at The Hall by the Sea at Dreamland Theme Park where there're custom bikes, food/drink, vendors, tattooists, music, skateboarding and more. Finally, on the Sunday, for those in no rush to return to reality, there's a chill day on the beach; a last supper at the best restaurant in town; and watching the sun go down on the beach.

I've done this show each year since it started, and it's a must-attend event on my calendar as it's another chance to catch up with likeminded vintage chopper people and see a whole bunch of choppers from the UK and beyond all in one place. As I said, it started on the Thursday night in one of the

Sleazy Rider

side streets just off from the seafront that opens up into a small square and, when I arrived, was already heaving – the vibe was great, and it went on 'til the wee small hours. Friday's run has around 130 bikes, and as the plan was to head along the beachfront, loop around Dreamland, then head along the coast sticking as close to the sea as the route'd allow, ending up riding down a very narrow and twisty road to the pub in St. Margaret's Bay in France… well, not quite actually France, but it's so close my phone welcomed me to a French network when I arrived ahead of the main group.

I'd planned to head off early to get pics of the run going past Dreamland, then take a shortcut ahead of it to catch them mid-route, but I arrived at my chosen perfect spot just in time to see the last bike disappear over the brow of the hill in front of me. Thankfully, given that a lot of these bikes have fuel tanks the size of an ostrich egg, which means a lot of fuel stops, I managed to get ahead of them at one such stop, and got the shots I was after. It was one of the hottest days of the year and, once in the Pas-de-Calais… sorry, sorry, St.

Margaret's Bay, riders headed for the bar, the ice cream van or the very inviting sea before, sometime later, drifting off in dribs and drabs to make their way back to Margate at their leisure before the official event party which, again, went on 'til the early hours.

Saturday's main event opened its doors at 10am, and had rows of choppers, and the 'Come Hither' bikes that people'd built specially for the show on the stage. There were so many cool bikes, from the very shiny to the dragged-out-of-a-barn type, and everything in between, and multiple trade stands selling all things chopper-related. Scott had his Genny Shovel as the main raffle prize, and the overall winner of the show – Anthony from France's UL – got themselves an all expenses paid trip with their bike to Born Free in the States.

The show, and the event overall, was another great success, and all credit goes to Scott and his team. Its reputation grows year on year, and it now attracts visitors from not only the UK, but from the depths of Europe and beyond, and I, for one, can't wait for the next one.

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BACK INT' DAY, WHEN I WERE A LAD, IT WERE ALL GREEN FIELDS ROUND 'ERE, THA KNOWS… AHEM, I DO APOLOGISE – I APPEAR TO'VE BEEN TEMPORARILY POSSESSED BY A PASSING DEMONIC YORKSHIREMAN, TERRIBLY SORRY ABOUT THAT. I THINK HE'S GONE NOW, SO SHALL WE START AGAIN?

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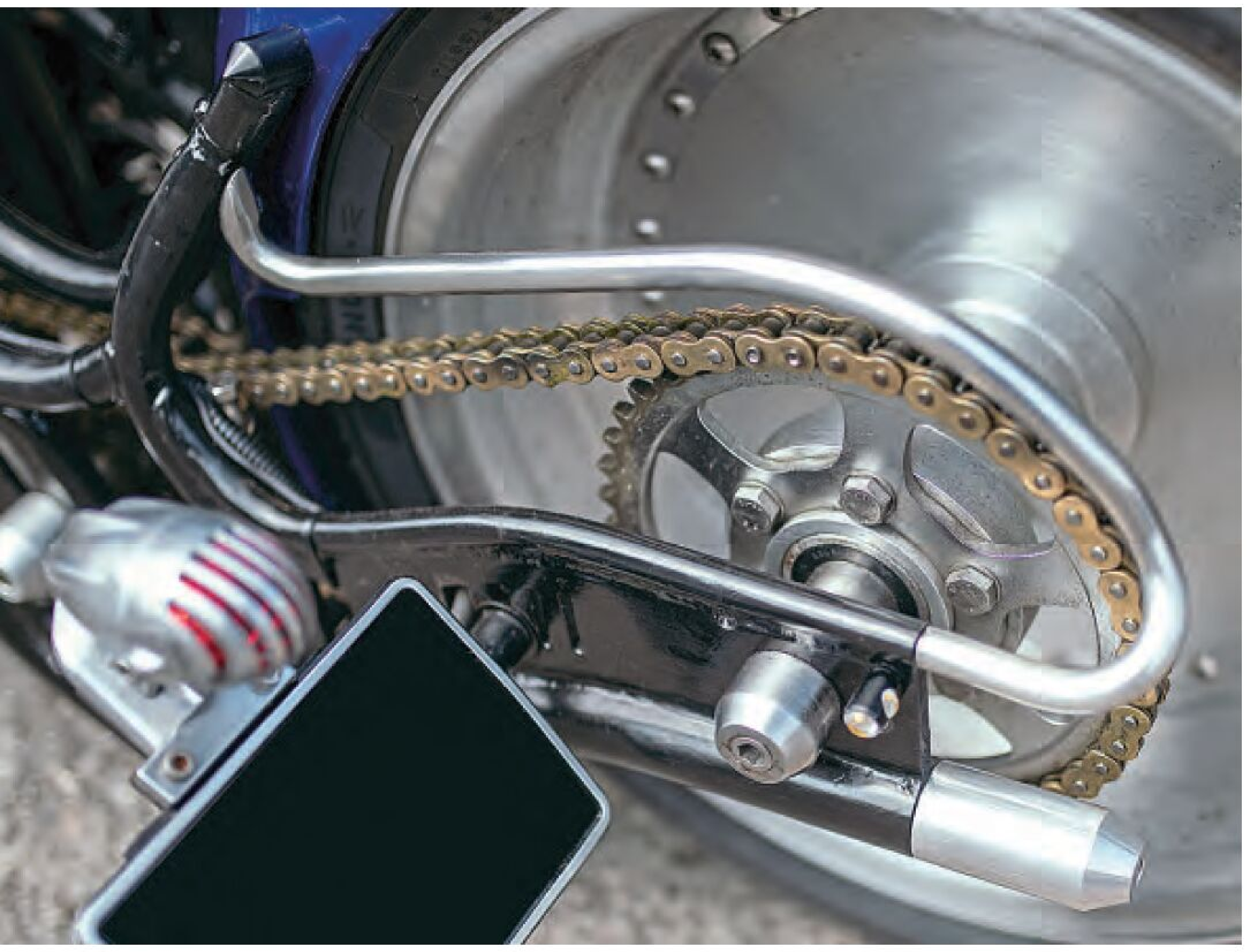
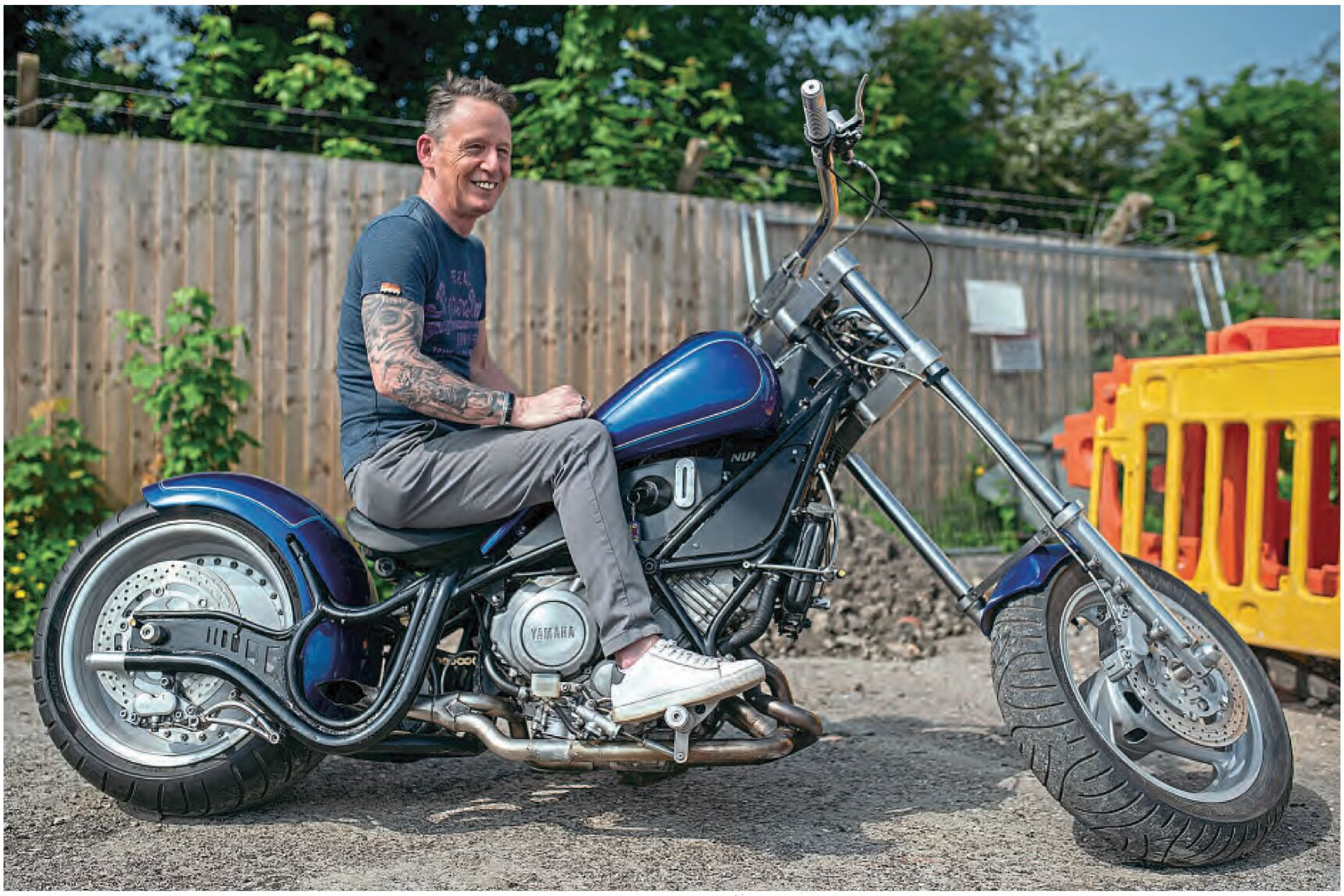


YAMAHA



Back in the early days of custom building, the only way to get your ’ands on a custom bike was to, for most folk, either build it yersel’ or get a really good mate to help you/build it for you. There were custom shops, of course, who’d do a lot of, or all if you really wanted, the work before you, but just going out and buying a chop, or a custom of any kind, wasn’t anywhere as easy as it is today.

I s’pose you could argue that this ’ere magazine, Back Street Heroes, started to change all that back in the ’80s with the Smalls ads where people could advertise their bikes (and themselves, too) to an audience who were looking for something a little out of the ordinary. Then, of course, in 1995, eBay was launched by Pierre Morad Omidyar, a French-born Iranian-American, now a billionaire, and suddenly the world of buying and selling choppers etm.* was suddenly a whole lot easier than happening upon a bike you liked the look of in a pub car park or in someone’s shed. Everyone and their dog could now scour the ’Net for a chop (well, okay, perhaps not their dog – paws’re really difficult to type with) and, with this newfound democratisation of custom biking, the number of people riding ’em, and shops to cater for ’em, too, rocketed. The rest, as they say, is history.

Having said that, Richard Lavender, ‘Craney’ to his mates, did the purchasing of his chop the old-fashioned way. He found it, somehow, languishing untouched and unloved, in a shed in Kidderminster, and decided he’d buy it and kiss it and love it and squeeze it and hug it and call it George… okay, so perhaps not George (and he probably didn’t do the kissing/squeezing/hugging either, but you never know). He took it to the guru of all things Yamaha in Manchester (well, XS650s anyway), Martin Welsby (who’s had a few bikes in BSH), and commissioned him to re… er, commission it ’cos it deserved to be back on the road.

Now, Craney doesn’t know too much about it – it may’ve been painted black at some point, and possibly green at another, but that’s pretty much it. A little (not very) diligent searching on t’Internet (putting a pic of it on the BSH Page and Group and asking ‘Anyone know owt about this?’) turned up the fact that it was, apparently, commissioned by a guy called Lee, possibly from up Blackpool way, from the now defunct Not-A-Fridge, but what happened to it after that is one of the great mysteries of life like why is the fluff in your navel always blue; who did frame Roger Rabbit; and does anyone know the seating capacity of the hand-basket we’re all going to Hell in following the recent US election?

What is ascertainable is the fact that it is (a) based around a Yamaha TDM850 parallel-twin engine, (b) has a very swoopy, nicely-made frame with a two-chain jackshaft and a humungous rear wheel (billet split-rim, possibly a Taylormade one at a guess?), (c) there’s a back wheel in t’front (possibly the original TDM one?) to give a fat front tyre, (d) the ’lectrics and the airbox’re up under the tank(s), and (e) it’s blue. The seat may be summat to do with Rolls-Royce, and the tank(s) are fat-bobs that’ve been extended to suit. We do know that it was painted and/or pinstriped by The Monster Forge in Rochdale and someone called Phil Appleyard (who may or may not work there), but as they haven’t posted owt on their Facebook Page since 2017 I don’t know for sure.

What I do know is that since these pics were taken it’s been sold and’s gone to live with somone else so, on that note, I’ll sign off and just let you look at the pretty pictures. Ta-ra.

NIK

PICS BY **GARETH WILLIAMS**

SPEC:
1999 Yamaha TDM 850 engine (one-off air-box/electrics box, one-off radiator guards, one-off gear linkage, one-off exhausts), one-off rigid frame, one-off twin-chain outrigger conversion, unknown forwards, unknown rear wheel as front/unknown disc/unknown caliper, one-off wide-glide billet yokes/fork brace, one-off billet handlebars risers/grips, one-off ‘bars, aftermarket fat bob tanks (modified), one-off seat, aftermarket rear mudguard (modified), aftermarket billet split-rim rear wheel, unknown rear disc/caliper, one-off rear caliper mount, one-off chainguard, one-off side-mount ’plate, one-off loom, aftermarket headlight/tail-light

FINISH:
Blue metallic with custom pinstriping by The Monster Forge (**07788 277532** or **themonsterforge@gmail.com**)/Phil Appleyard

ENGINEERING:
Bike originally built by Not-A-Fridge Customs (allegedly), recommissioned by Martin Welsby

THANKS TO:
“Martin Welsby for getting it back on the road; & The Monster Forge/Phil Appleyard for paint/pinstriping…”

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*etm. Latin, the short form of ‘et merda’ – literally, ‘an’ shit’…

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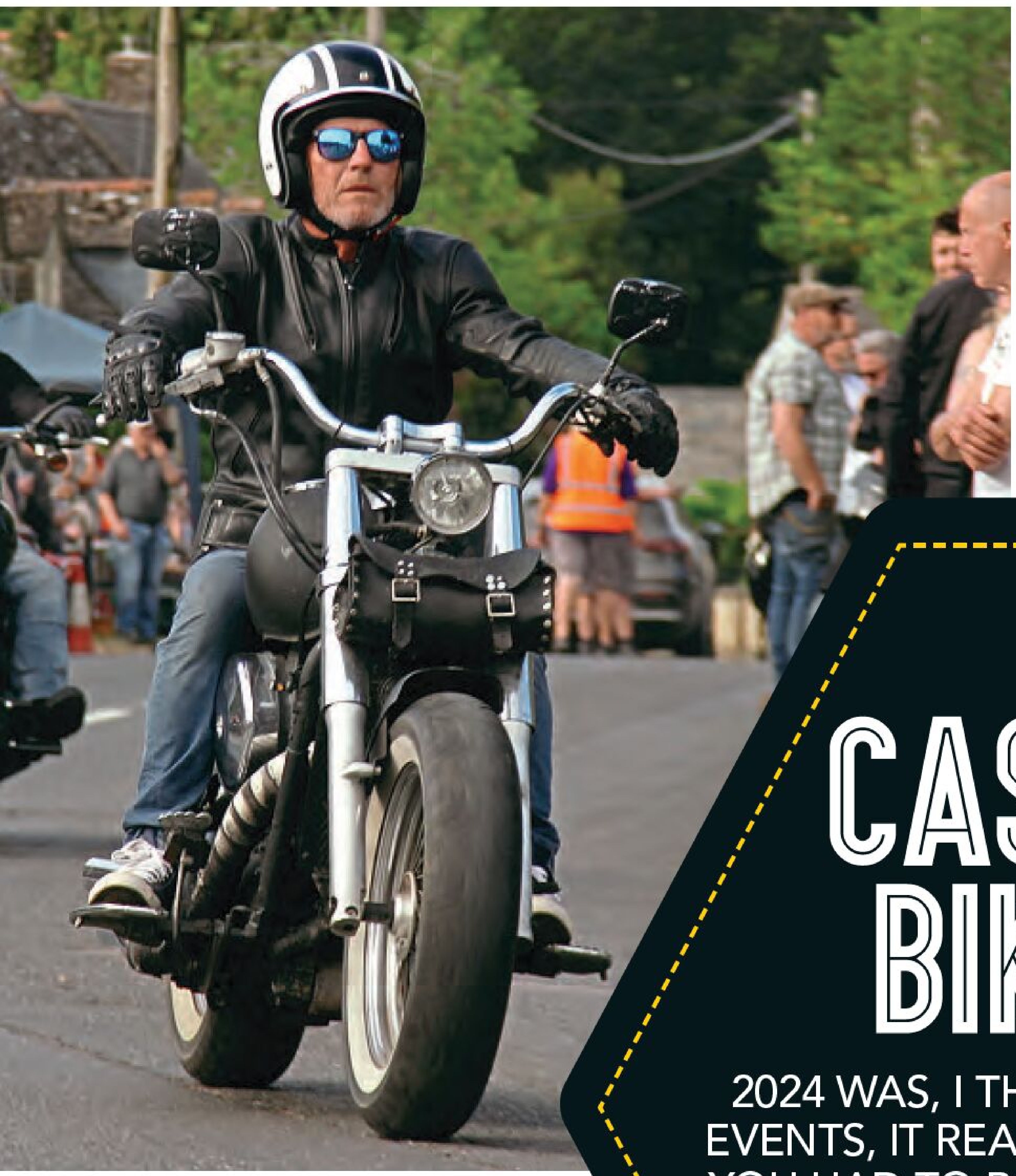
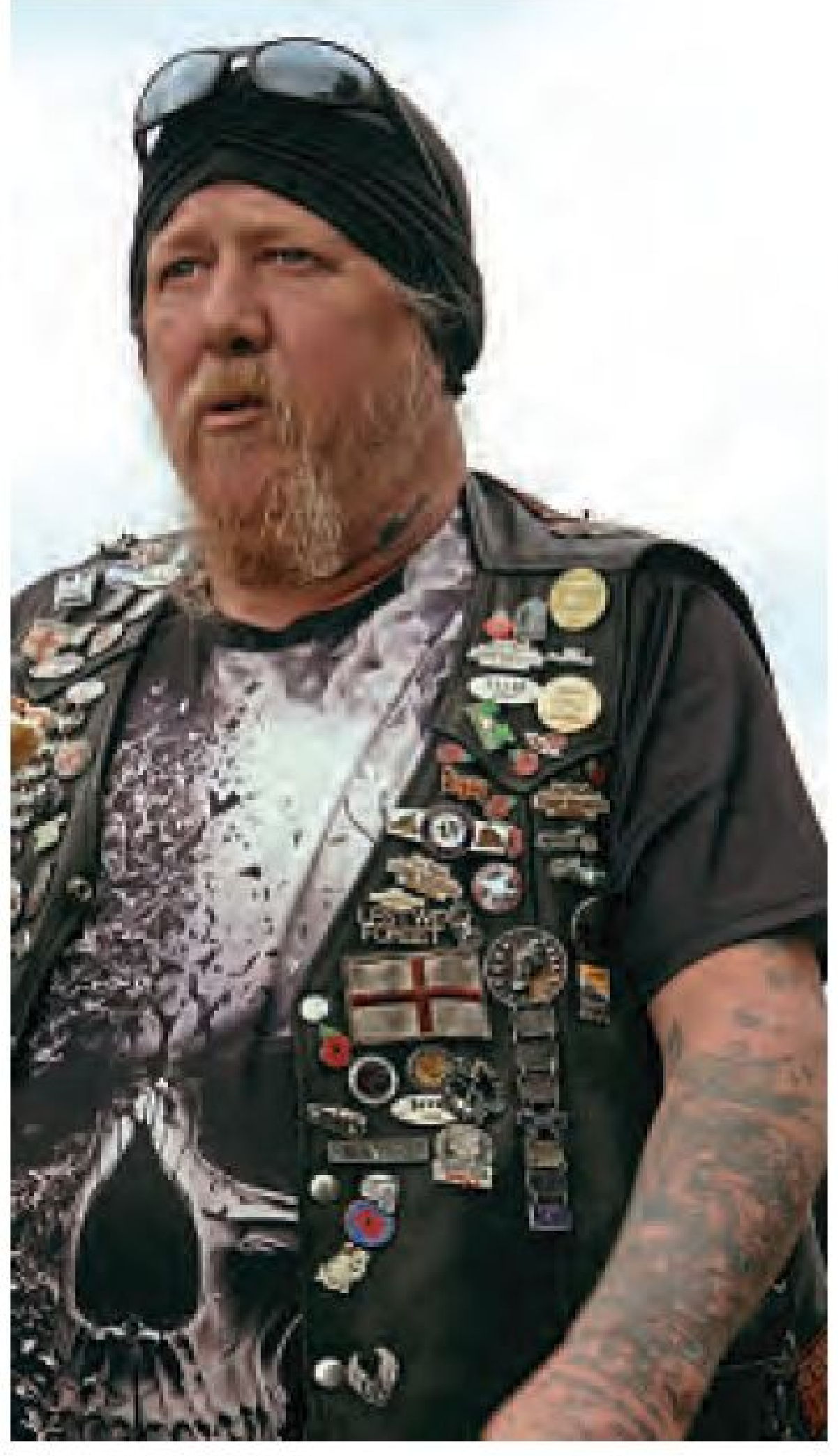


Event

CASSINGTON BIKE NIGHT

2024 WAS, I THINK, AN ODD YEAR FOR BIKE EVENTS, IT REALLY WAS – ALMOST EVERY ONE YOU HAD TO PAY FOR WAS, AS FAR AS I COULD TELL, DOWN ON NUMBERS, EITHER A LITTLE OR A LOT, BUT THE FREE, OR NEARLY FREE, 'UNS WERE HEAVING. ROYSTON & DISTRICT MCC'S MELDRETH BIKE NIGHT, FOR EXAMPLE, WAS RAMMED, AS WAS THIS – THE FAMOUS CASSINGTON BIKE NIGHT AT CASSINGTON, NEAR WITNEY IN OXFORDSHIRE.

STP



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Pam and I went to it a few years ago on our way somewhere else (and, 'cos we were in the van on our way somewhere, ended up parking somewhere near Swindon), and it was a really good night – the little village of Cassington, just off the A40 west of Oxford, was completely taken over by bikes, as it has been every year on the last Monday in June since… well, quite a long time ago really. It was started by, apparently, the British Motorcycle Riders Club Oxford nearly 30 years ago, but they handed control to the village in 2012, and they've run it ever since. Attendance is now in excess of 10,000 (for a population recorded as 794 in 2021!) and, as you can imagine, that means the tiny village is completely overrun by 'airy (and, these days, not so 'airy) 'erberts on motorbikes.

Originally based around the Red Lion pub and the village green opposite it, these days it's far outgrown that. The green is still used, yes, but not just for bike parking – there're a variety of club, trade and catering stands, and bikes also park in the school car park,

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playground, and field at the back, as well as in every conceivable nearby space as well as a yooge field out the back of the village, and there's an equally 'normous field further out for them four-wheeled things, too (no, not quads – cars n' vans n' stuff) to keep them from cluttering up the place and making it look untidy.

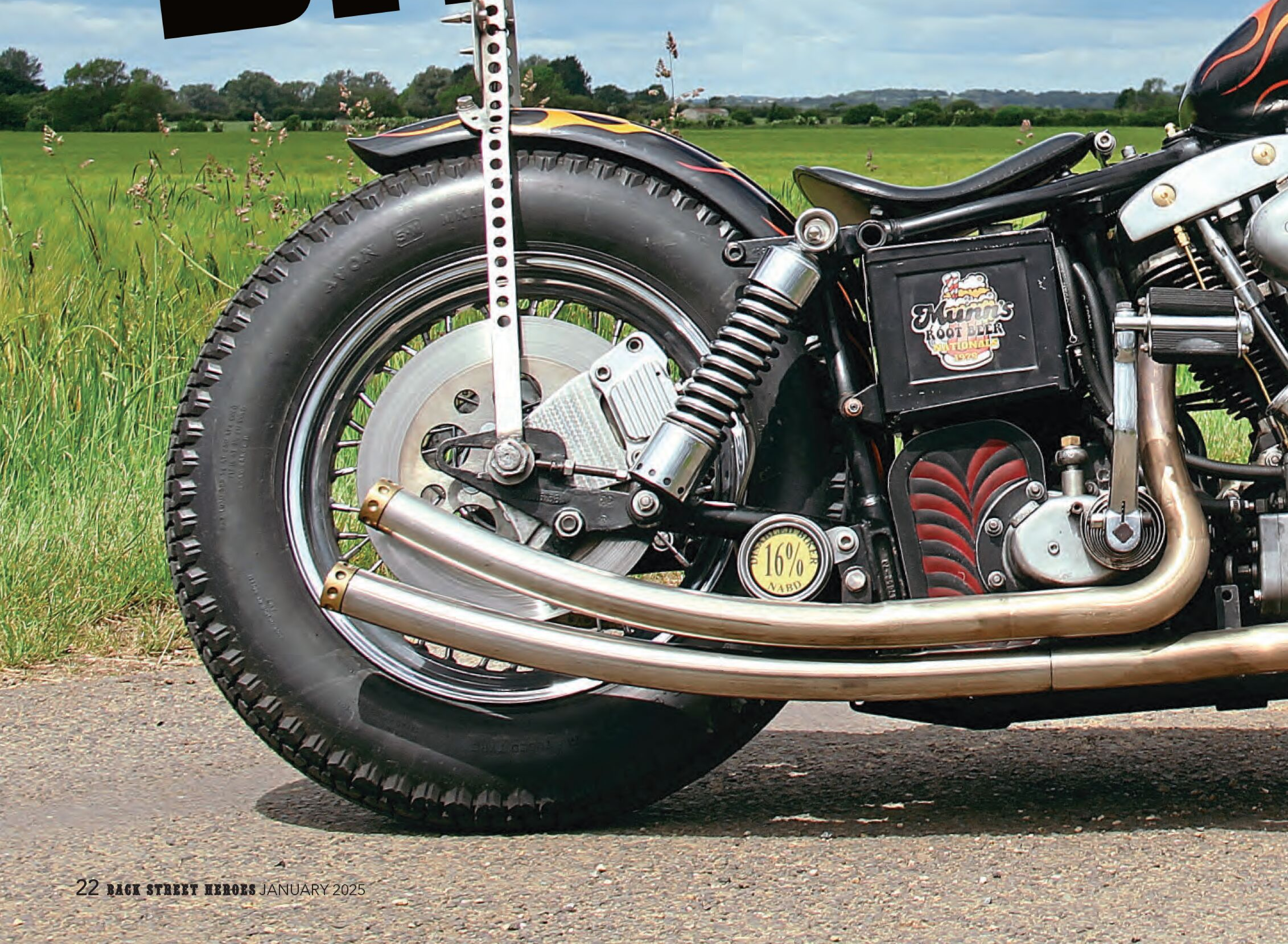
Yes, so the majority of bikes these days are, just as they are at most places, stockers of the sports, nekkid, and adventure variety, but if you're into classics there're loads (and loads, and loads, and loads); if you're into customs there're always some crackers if you take the time to look; and if you're into exotica there're always a few o' them, too (road-going Godier Genoud endurance race replica anyone?). Hell, there was even a Niken, and that means that, including my long-term test one I had a few years back, I've now seen… umm (counts up on fingers) three.

Anyway, I'm going to sign off 'ere and give you more space for pictures 'cos pictures're what you really want to see, aren't they, except to say that 2025's Cassington Bike Night'll be on Monday, June 30.

NIK

BIG SKY SHOVEL

WE'VE HAD A COUPLE OF CONRAD'S BIKES IN BEFORE (HIS ZED CHOP IN ISSUE 430, AND HIS KWAK DIGGER IN 446), AND YOU CAN PRETTY INSTANTLY SPOT HIS BIKES AT FIRST GLANCE, NO MATTER WHAT THEY ARE, BECAUSE OF THE HANDLEBAR ARRANGEMENT – THE LEFT 'BAR HAS JUST A WRAP OF VELCRO AROUND IT, AND THE RIGHT HAS ALL THE RELEVANT CONTROLS/ LEVERS BECAUSE, AS HAS BEEN MENTIONED BEFORE, HE IS THE BRACHIAL PLEXUS MOTORCYCLIST.

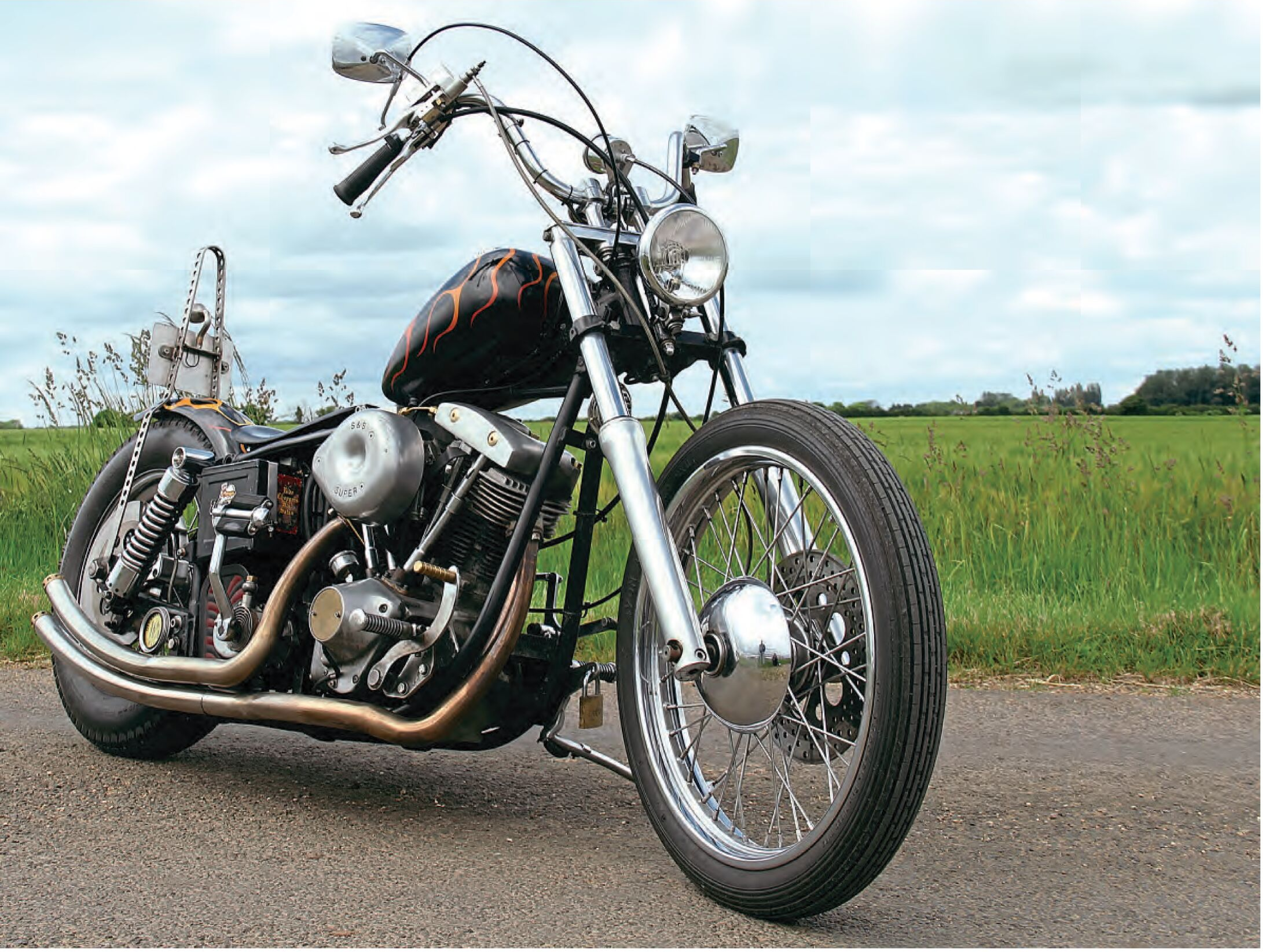


S&S
SUPER
AVON SPEEDMASTER

MPH

Ride
Choppers
Hail
Satan

DISABLED BIKER
16%
NABD


S&S
SUPER

Now, I'm not going to go into what a brachial plexus injury is again 'cos I've already talked about it a couple o' three times but, suffice to say, it usually puts an end to someone's riding career in no uncertain terms, and it's all credit to him that not only has he worked out a way to keep doing what he loves best in the world, but has also continued to build custom bikes, one-handed, too. I'll let him tell you about this bike, his long-term dream Shovelhead Harley, shall I?

"For as long as I've been into bikes I've wanted a Shovelhead. I was lucky enough to go the States a few times when I was younger (my Dad was American), and remember seeing them there, and then, later, walking into Oxford Motorcycle Engineers in 1982 and seeing a Lowrider. I knew one day I'd have one, either a Lowrider or something equally cool.

In 2021 I put the feelers out to see what was out there, but nothing I saw really floated my boat (or was way too much money), but then this '77 FXE Super Glide popped up on a Facebook group and I liked it straightaway, especially its stance. I contacted the owner, Craig, and went to see it – a deal was done and, a few days later, he dropped it off at mine. It ran and was on the road, but I was going to have to modify it to ride with my one working arm – all the hand controls needed moving to the right side, for a start, but that's not too difficult as I've done it many times before on my other bikes. I also thought I might as well make some other changes as well while I'm at it, to make it more me – the mustard yellow grips and brown seat had to go for a start! I bought black grips, and Annie from Cobra Leathers dyed the seat black. I didn't think the flat 'bars really suited the bike, what with the stance, and the sissy-bar, so on went a set of mini apes, and to give it that '70s vibe I put a mini speedo and tacho on the 'bars, stacked one above the other rather than side by side. During this time, I also discovered all the electrics were micro wires and relays, and not done very well, so the whole lot went in the bin and I rewired it with standard wires, and went through the brakes, oils, replaced the front tyre, etc.

Time for the first test ride… Oh dear, a badly-adjusted clutch meant I shot off down the road, and there was no rear brake at all (and the front needed pumping a few times to get it to work). Of course, I had pockets full of tools, so managed to dial in the carb, and get the clutch adjusted properly, and the front brake working properly, too. I rode it around 'til the winter, tweaking things here and changing things there, and then decided to get the oil leaks looked at, and electronic ignition fitted. I took the bike round to my friend Adam's workshop and left it with him and, a few days later, he rang and said I'd better come and look… It turns out the engine inspection cover'd been glued in as the threads'd been stripped out, the gearbox was leaking, and the front cylinder base gasket was leaking, too. He suggested a full engine and gearbox rebuild by the legendary Baz – just as well really 'cos it was quite tired and bits were starting to fail.

All went as smoothly as it can do with a rebuild. While it was in bits I thought it'd be a good idea to get the brakes sorted. Mike at Full Metal Ornament made up a bracket to mount a Billet 4 caliper on the front, and the rear brake problem turned out to be a broken circlip, a badly scored bore, and rotten seals*. A new GMA caliper, and a new master-cylinder, and hey presto – a working brake! One of the rear shocks, we found, had no oil in it, so I had to get another set, and Mike made up some bump-stops as the rear mudguard was trying to get through the oil tank. The engine and 'box came back, and it was put back together, but because of the Panhead swingarm the chain runs very close the starter-housing in the inner primary and wears its way through – after checking online, the general consensus seems to be 'that's the price you pay for being cool'.

First test ride after the rebuild wasn't great – the motor kept hanging after shutting the throttle to idle, but a quick phone call to Matt at Matts Machine Shop revealed that, if you take the points out, sometimes you need to fit stronger return springs on the advance/retard. Problem solved. Since then the motor's done about 700 miles and is freeing up nicely. I've been fannying around with the carb, dialling it in so it idles and pulls nicely, and I've been tweaking the look – a brass bit here, a sticker there. Nothing major, you understand, just little things to make it look like the bikes I fell in love with in the '70s. There're a few things that might be done in the future, but I love the way it looks – '70s Americana floats my boat. Is it a good bike for riding? Mmm, probably not, really – there's very little ground clearance on the right, and even less on the left, and just one inch of suspension travel at the back, but is it cool? Would you park it in your house to look at in the winter? I would, and probably have by the time you read this…"

SPEC:
1977 H-D 1200cc/74 cubic inch FXE Super Glide Shovelhead engine (Andrew's cam, S&S carb/air-cleaner, Dynatek ignition, one-off stainless exhausts)/frame/forwards (some brass fittings)/wheels (21-inch front/16-inch rear)/brake discs (front/rear)/yokes/handlebar controls/oil tank/battery box, Avon tyres, Harrison Billet Four front brake caliper, Kawasaki VN1500 forks, braided brake lines, mini ape 'bars, RST front brake master-cylinder, old British/aftermarket switches, aftermarket chrome mini speedo/tacho, aftermarket grips, single-cap Mustang petrol tank, aftermarket seat (modified), aftermarket rear mudguard (modified), one-off stainless 'plate holder, one-off stainless sissy-bar, H-D Panhead swingarm/shocks (modified), GMA rear caliper, one-off torque arm, one-off loom, Bates-style headlight, one-off stainless tail-light

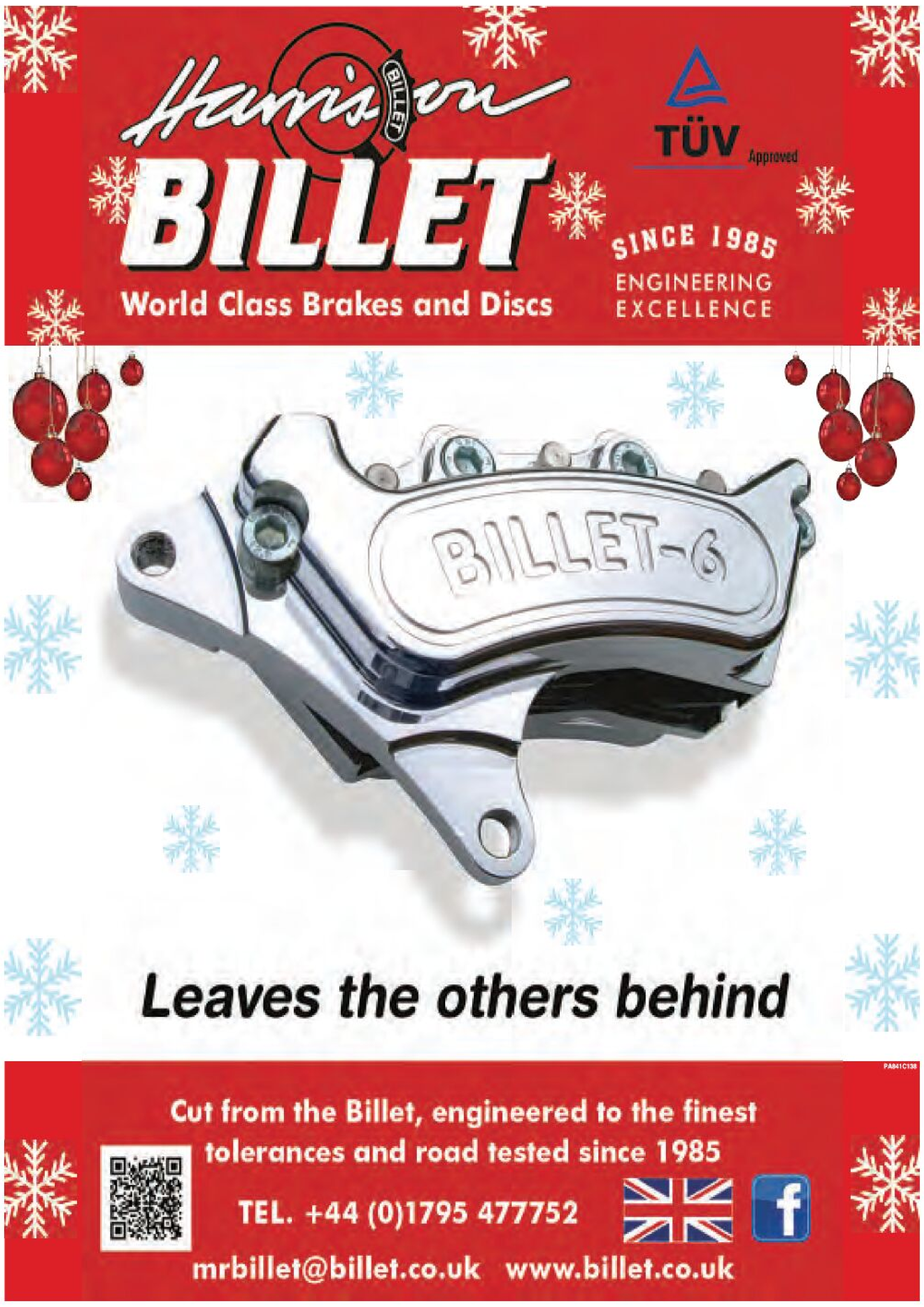
FINISH:
Black & flames by unknown painter, outer primary cover dechromed/polished by Pro Polishers (**01993 868806** or **www.pro-polishers.uk**)

ENGINEERING:
Front brake caliper bracket/rear shock bump stops by Mike of Full Metal Ornament (**01993 851580** or **www.fullmetalornament.com**), exhaust/sissy-bar/forks/rear mudguard by Craig House

THANKS TO:
"Adam for all his help; Matt for advice on engine/carb set up; Baz for the engine rebuild; & Annie for sorting the seat colour…"

CONRAD
PICS BY **NIK**

*it's all the pollution in our waters poisoning the fish, I reckon…



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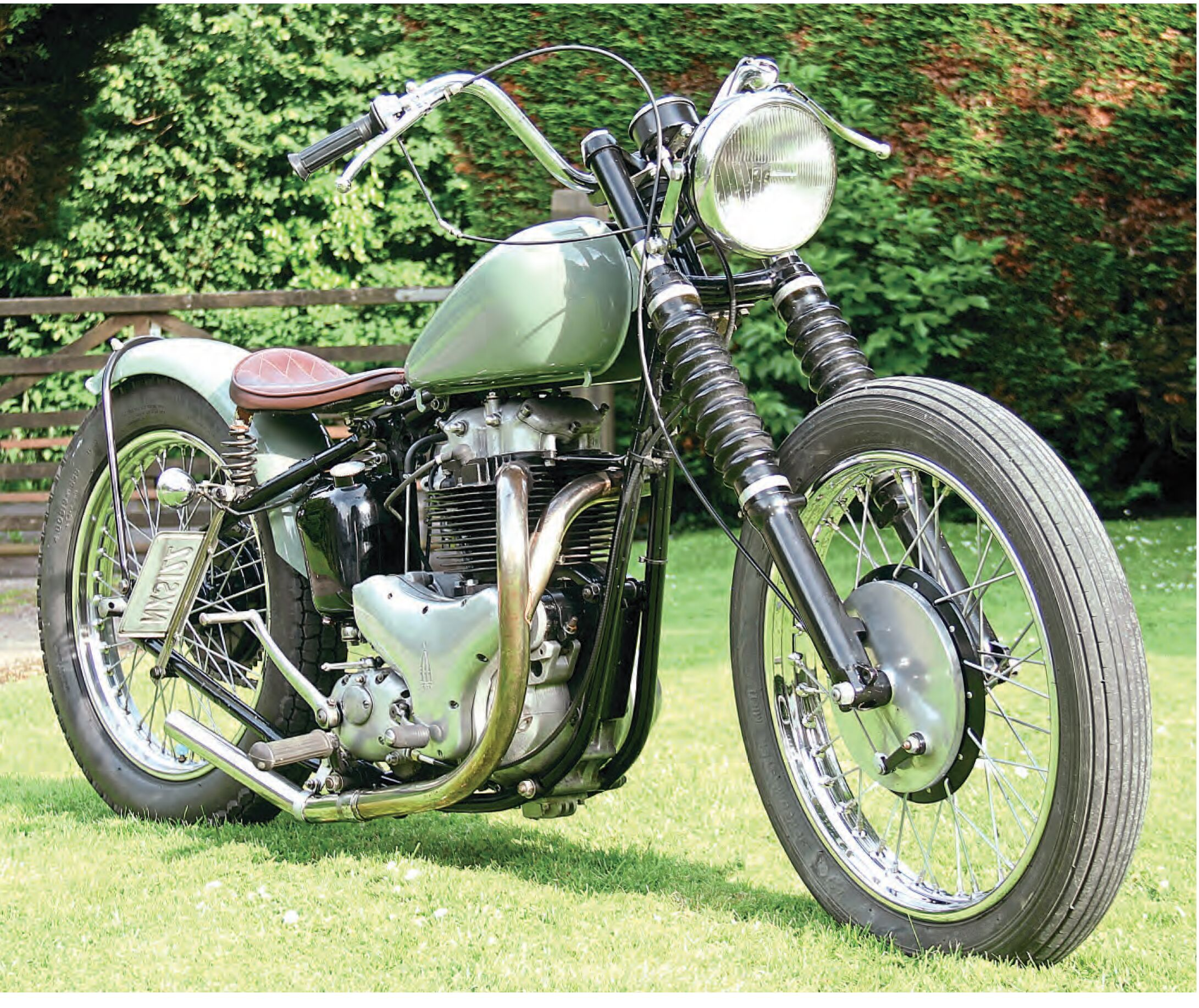
SHED-BU BEEZER

ILT

YEAH, YEAH, I KNOW I'M BIASED COS, I KNOW NOT WHY, I HAVE A THING ABOUT BSA A10s, BUT WHEN YOU SEE SOMETHING AS SIMPLE AND CLEAN AS THIS 'ERE BEEZER YOU CAN PROBABLY SEE WHY...

MILES-PER-HOUR
SMITHS



BSA

SPEC:
1951 BSA A10 650cc engine (Amal Monoblock carb, open alloy carb trumpet, BSA 6-spring clutch, Lucas magneto, one-off stainless exhaust)/frame (modified)/foot-rests/controls/crinkle rear hub/brake/headlight (LED bulb)/front wheel rim/rear mudguard (modified), Avon SM tyres (front/rear), Norton front wheel hub/brake/forks (aftermarket gaiters)/yokes, BSA A65 Export 'bars, Smiths speedo, Doherty grips, BSA Bantam petrol tank (modified), aftermarket universal bobber seat, BSA rigid oil tank, one-off side-mount 'plate, one-off loom, aftermarket LED tail-light

FINISH:
BSA Bantam green by Shane at Tor Trucks

ENGINEERING:
Bike built by owner, magneto rebuild by Martin at Vintage Magnetos (**0117 967 5225** or **andrew.dry@blueyonder.co.uk**)

THANKS TO:
"Shane at Tor Trucks for blasting/painting frame/tanks/mudguard; & Martin for magneto rebuild…"

Rich, the owner, says: "Growing up in cider-drinking country, I had the luxury of having an orchard to ride about in. My father, a dyed-in-the-wool BSA man, plonked me on a motorcycle as soon as he could, a rigid Norman Villiers 2-stroke 125, and I literally rode it until the wheels collapsed. That was in the 1980s and I was aged about eight, and I've been riding British motorcycles (and drinking cider) ever since."

As soon as he was old enough he had a succession of British bikes, but that first, the Norman, with its rigid frame, made a lasting impression, and he always fancied something like it for the road.

As with most people who mess around with old Brit bikes (and, yes, most of the rest of us, too), he'd collected a fair stash of parts over the years, and one of them was a genuine A10 rigid frame from 1951 (A10 frames of the era were available as rigids, but plunger rear suspension, originally developed for the export market, was more common), that he'd picked up somewhere as a potential project, but'd never quite got started. He kept looking at it, and thinking, and made a start on it a couple of times, but it wasn't until he went sur La Manche to Flanders Chopper Bash (which, after a few years' absence, is back for 2025) that he gave himself the mental kick-up-the-backside he needed.

The frame was dragged out and assessed; clearly, it'd been lengthened in the rear at some point, probably in the 1970s, which'd also lowered it, and a rummage through the parts stock in the shed turned up most of the big bits to make something that rode. In fact, after a few calculations he found all he really needed to find was a petrol tank, a mudguard of some sort for the rear, some engine parts that the, also 1951, motor he'd turned up'd need, and electrics. He had a complete Norton front end, with wheel, from another project, and that was offered up ("because that's what I had"), and he also had a crinkle-hub (sometimes referred to as a 'splined hub') BSA rear wheel, and that made the chassis a roller.

For a tank (and wanting to keep it all as much BSA as possible… bar the front end, o' course) he figured a Bantam 'un'd look the part as they're a nice shape, and size, and so one was sourced from a well-known online auction site (can you guess which?) and, with a slight modification, fitted perfectly; "The colour was spot on, too!" He also, after a little trial and error, fitted some BSA A65 Export 'bars. "I did try lower, flatter 'bars but they just didn't look right." As he says: "Things were starting to come together nicely."

He went through the engine when the needed bits'd arrived, and found that it was in pretty good order, really only needing the magneto rebuilding (a job entrusted to Martin at Vintage Magnetos in Bristol as he'd done work for him before). The angled carb manifold he got from some chopper shop in the States, partly because he wanted to kick the carb out the side somehow to run a trumpet air-filter, and partly because the new, later, Amal Monobloc carb wouldn't fit under the modified frame. The exhaust is just, he says, some bits he had lying about ("like you do"), and it has a dynamo that runs an LED bulb in the stock BSA headlight and an off-the-shelf LED rear light ("that my brother gave me. It runs directly off the dynamo through a regulator, and it's okay to get home from the pub").

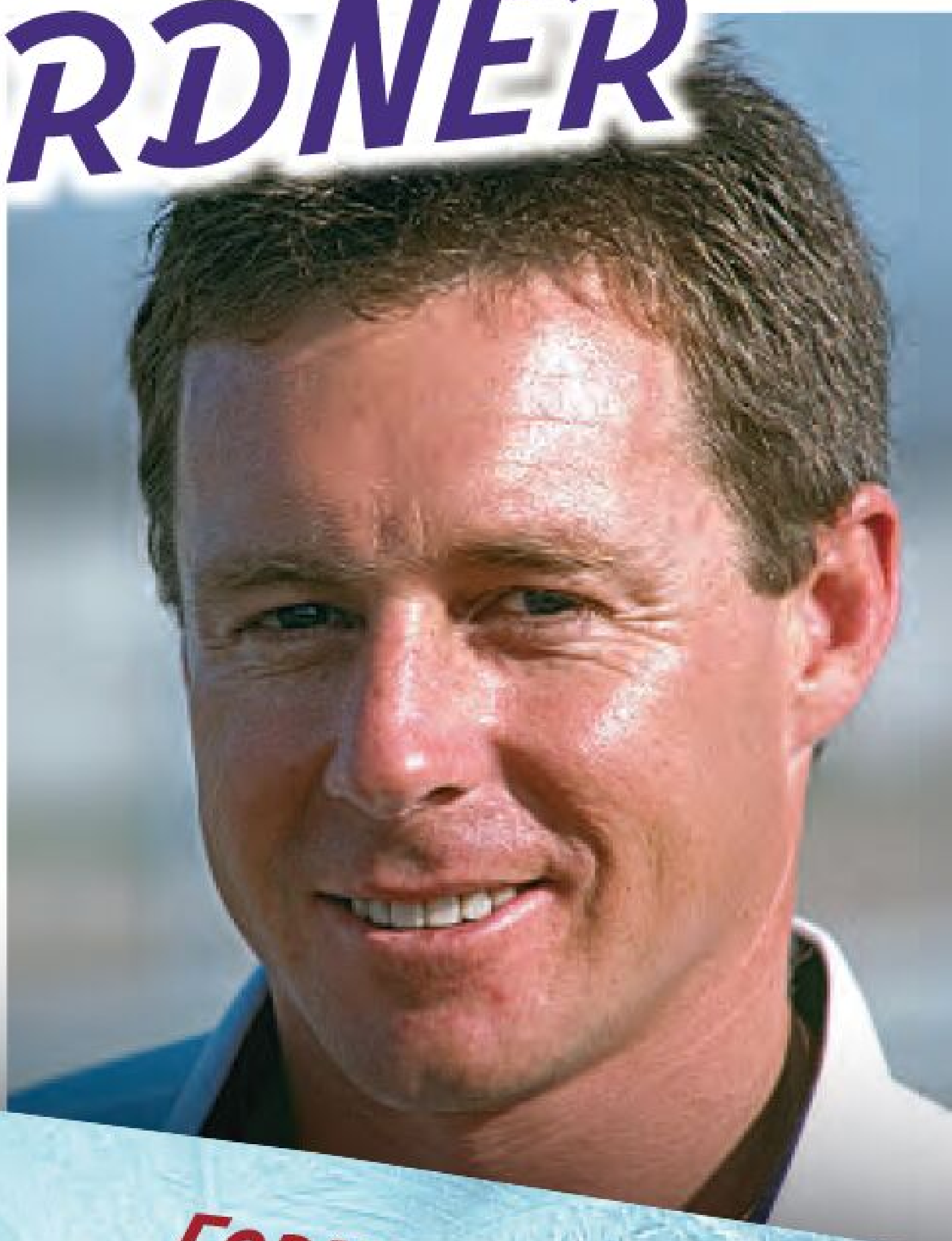
After a rough dry-build it was shipped off to the paint shop, where the tank and rear mudguard were done afresh in Bantam green, and the frame and oil tank in black, by Shane at Tor Trucks. "Nice and simple,", he says "and subtle, too… and apart from the mag, the paint was the only other thing I didn't do myself."

Last few parts, once back from the truck place, were a universal bobber seat, and some basic electrics, and very soon he had a complete and running bike, but no documents. With old British bikes though, that's often not a problem – the BSA Owners Club dated the frame and engine numbers, and he jumped through the hoops of the DVLA registration process ("The inspector they sent certainly didn't know much about BSA motorcycles!") and, soon after, a V5 was issued – "I was away!"

So, what's it like then, Rich? (Apart from being almost unspeakably cool, of course…) "It rides just like a long, low, rigid A10 should do – just what I wanted. The rivet counters aren't so impressed, though, because it was a genuine rigid frame, not a modified plunger or later swingarm frame, and so is quite rare… not that I care! I didn't build it to sell it – it's definitely a keeper."

NIK

STAR GUEST
WAYNE GARDNER



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Event

MPH VINTAGE SPRINT

IF YOU'RE READING THIS THEN THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE THAT, AS WELL AS CUSTOM BIKES, YOU HAVE AN APPRECIATION OF ALL THINGS CUSTOM, TOO, AND FOR MANY BSH FOLK THAT VERY DEFINITELY INCLUDES HOT RODS.

BSA
MOTORCYCLES
CAUTION

BOX
62
62
LEVIS

STRONGBOW

CUSTOM
CAUTION
43
35
35
DOWN
to
EARTH
CUSTOM & CLASSIC
AUTO WIRING
M.P.H.

BERG
19
O'Neill
VINTAGE FORD
M.P.H.

M.P.H.
27

FOO FIGH
& EUR

The MPH Vintage Sprint's been set up to bring back the feel of 1950s drag racing, reproducing the days of early flag-to-flag racing like that in California back in the days after the Second World War. It's held at RAF Deenethorpe, just outside Weldon near Corby, in Northants (put NN17 3AN into your sat-nav to get you there, or find Weldon on a map, and take the A427 out of it, and it's on the left at the sign). It's old-fashioned 1/8th-mile drags, predominantly for old hot rods, but very welcoming of older bikes, too, and it was one of my most enjoyable days out in 2024.

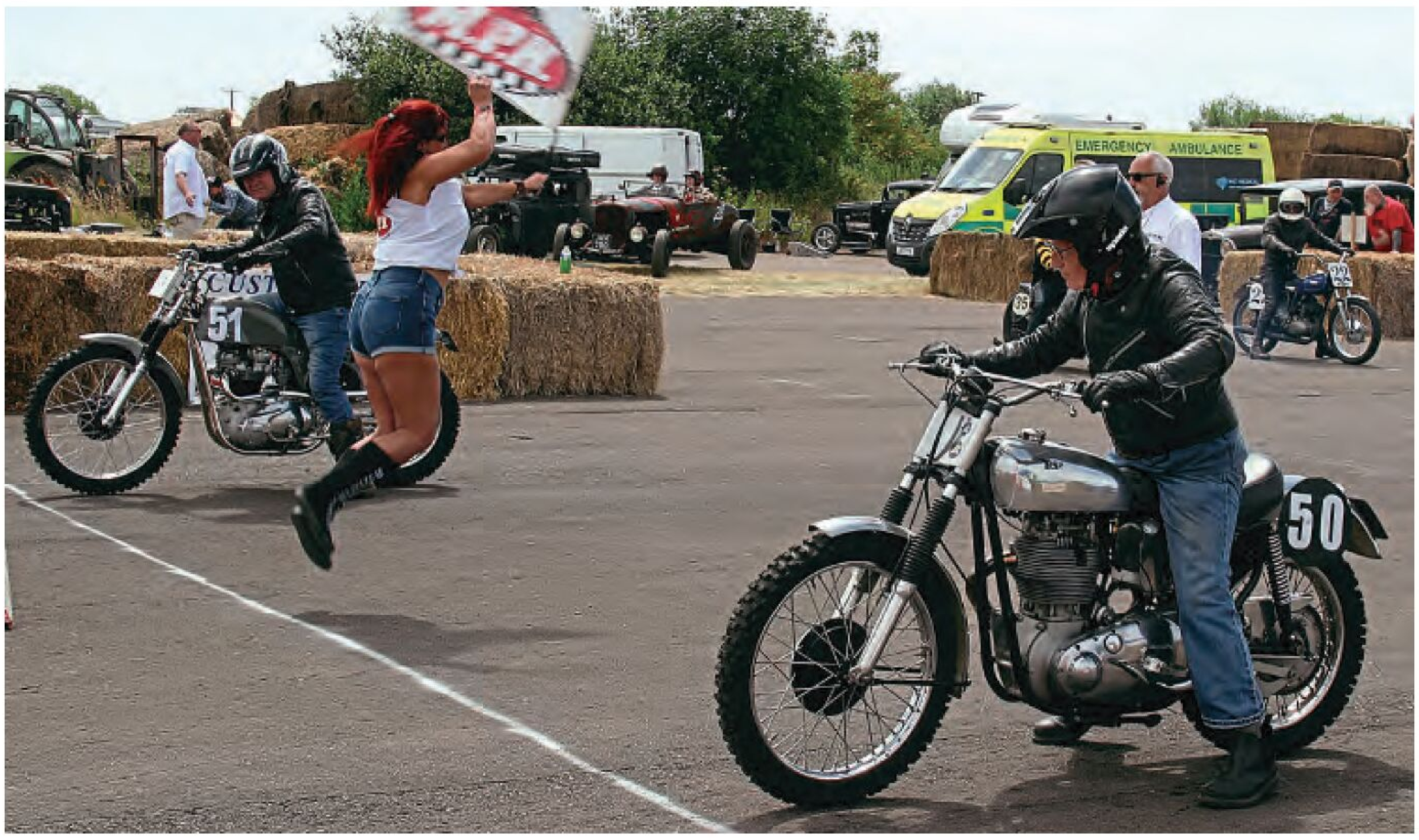
Strictly speaking, it's a weekend-long event, with music Friday and Saturday night, racing on the Saturday, and a show-and-shine on the Sunday, but as I'm not really interested in static hot rod shows, or listening to rockabilly music either, I only went along for the racing on the Saturday. Not being a big, over-regulated thing meant you could get up close and personal (don't be perverse, you know what I mean) with the cars, bikes, and racers, and wander amongst 'em to your heart's content as they got ready to race.

Flatheads, V8s and v-twins predominate, and both sound glorious when the loud-pedal, or the twist-grip, is activated, and I don't know many of our kind of people who'd ever tire of hearing a big, open-piped V8 being given what for. There's no burnout area so tyres're cold as they launch off the line, so there's chirping and tyre smoke aplenty from the more rapid of the 'rods, and you find yourself grinning as these uber-cool old cars, a lot of them the sort of thing you only see in old, grainy pictures or wobbly old cinematic footage, dice with each other away from the line.

There's no Christmas tree, timing gear, no lights at the end to tell you which car, or bike, got to the finish line first; just a lady starter with a flag who jumps in the air as she brings the flag down, the roar of engines, the squeak of tyres, the grins and almost maniacal grimaces of the drivers/riders as they fight to control their vehicles off the line. It's all about the launch, it really

Pistoneeze

350 cu EQUIPPED



Never Lose Your Edge

is, and, in fact, to everyone apart from the driver or rider, who actually gets to the finish first's probably academic – this sort of racing's about the visual impact, the smell of hot engines and tyres, the emotion, the start.

Bikewise there were, I think, just eleven entries: Michael Payne (no. 51) on a Metisse Triumph; Stan Wheeler (no. 50) on a BSA single; Luke Maltby (no. 75) on a hand-change Harley wi' springers; Herbie Hancox (no. 19) on a blue Triumph twin (didn't he have a hit in the '80s with an electronic instrumental track called 'Rockit'?); Will Watson (no. 35) on a 45; and the appropriately-named (nearly) Mick Harle (no. 24) on another Flattie, but I don't know if it was a 45 or a UL. There were also a couple of very, very, old, pre-First World War Dutch, or perhaps German (can't quite remember, sorry) H-Ds (one was grey so perhaps even a fabled Silent Gray Fellow from 1910), a pristine early Sporty, and a couple more examples of Brit iron, but as the programme was a little lacking on info' I can't tell you whose they were.

Moving to the cars… well, where do you begin? Model A and B Fords aplenty; Model Ts; hopped-up stockers; roof-chopped rat rods; pristine and cherry; and patina'd and weathered, too – something for anyone who likes old Yank cars of that era. Not knowing a lot about 'em, the finer points were lost on me, I'm afraid, but I did love the Salt Flats-inspired belly-tank racer, and the monster diesel rat rod that blew out so much black smoke it'd give Greta a coronary. Watching 'em all go off the line, some scrabbling for grip, and hearing the V8s roar, was just heavenly. Name of the weekend went to one of the car lot, too – Reverend Bounder. I have to admit I'm not sure whether that's his actual name, or a description of what got him defrocked as a priest…

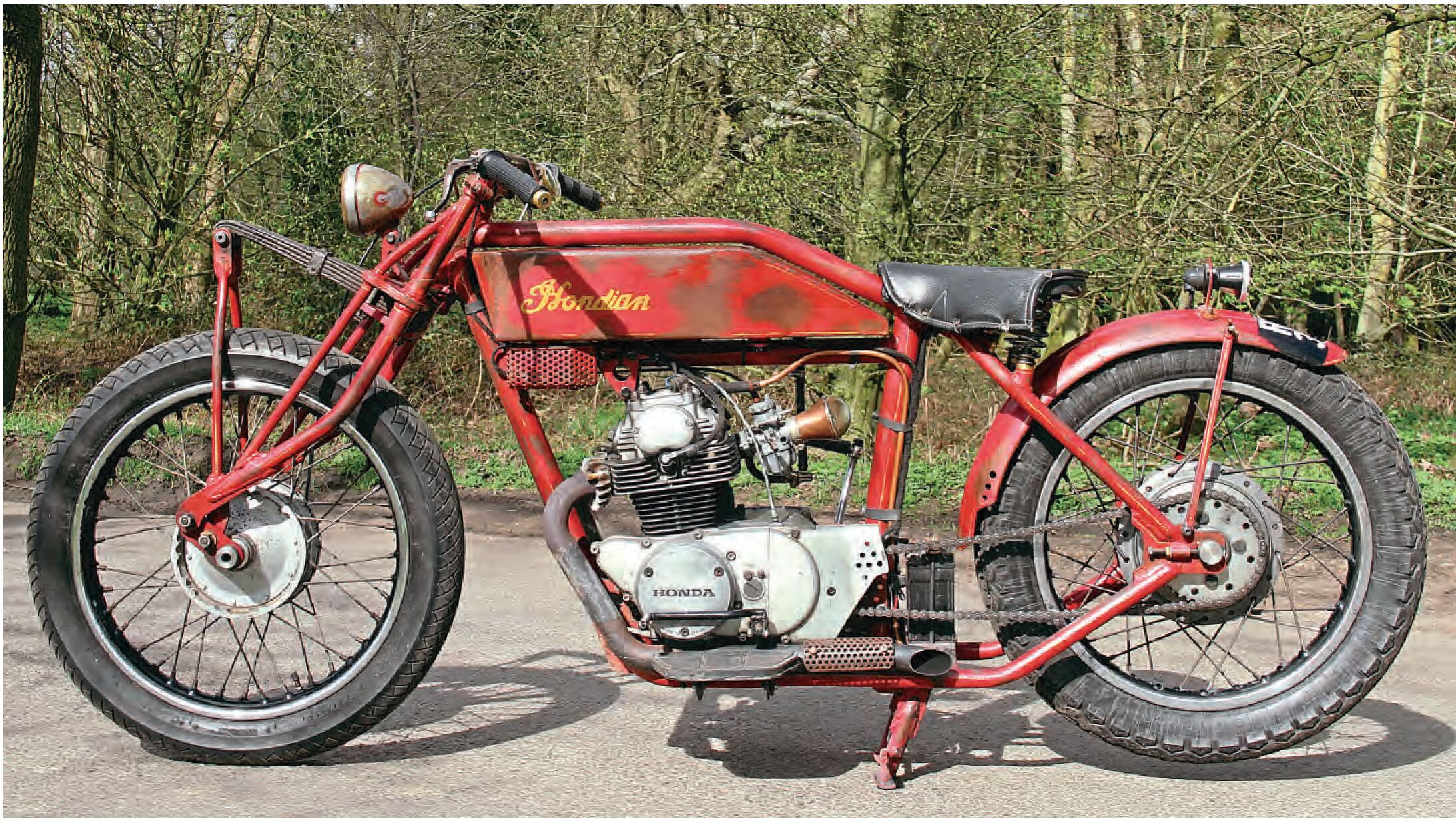
For the 2025 event (4-6 July), there've been some welcome changes. As suggested (by other folk, too, apparently, not just me), there'll be racing on the Sunday and day tickets (at just £15) so that more of us day-trippers can enjoy the spectacle. while weekend tickets're just £65. If you'd like to race, and you have a suitable bike o'course, that's an extra £20, which is an absolute bargain for two days' racing! Hmm, wonder if my 45 chop's going to be back on the road by then?

NIK

LEAF-SPRING ’ONDA LEAF, LEAF-LEAF-SPRING ’ONDA

(TO THE TUNE OF ‘HELP ME RHONDA’)

IT’S FUNNY HOW CERTAIN PEOPLE IN THE CUSTOM BIKE WORLD’RE, AND I DON’T MEAN THIS IN AN ANY WAY DEROGATORY WAY, PREDICTABLE, ISN’T IT? OKAY, SO ‘PREDICTABLE’ PROBABLY ISN’T QUITE THE RIGHT WORD ‘COS IT HAS A SLIGHTLY NEGATIVE CONTEXT WHEN USED TO DESCRIBE PEOPLE, BUT IT’S THE ONLY ONE I CAN THINK OF AT THIS PRECISE MOMENT THAT GETS CLOSE, SO BEAR WITH ME A SEC’, YEAH?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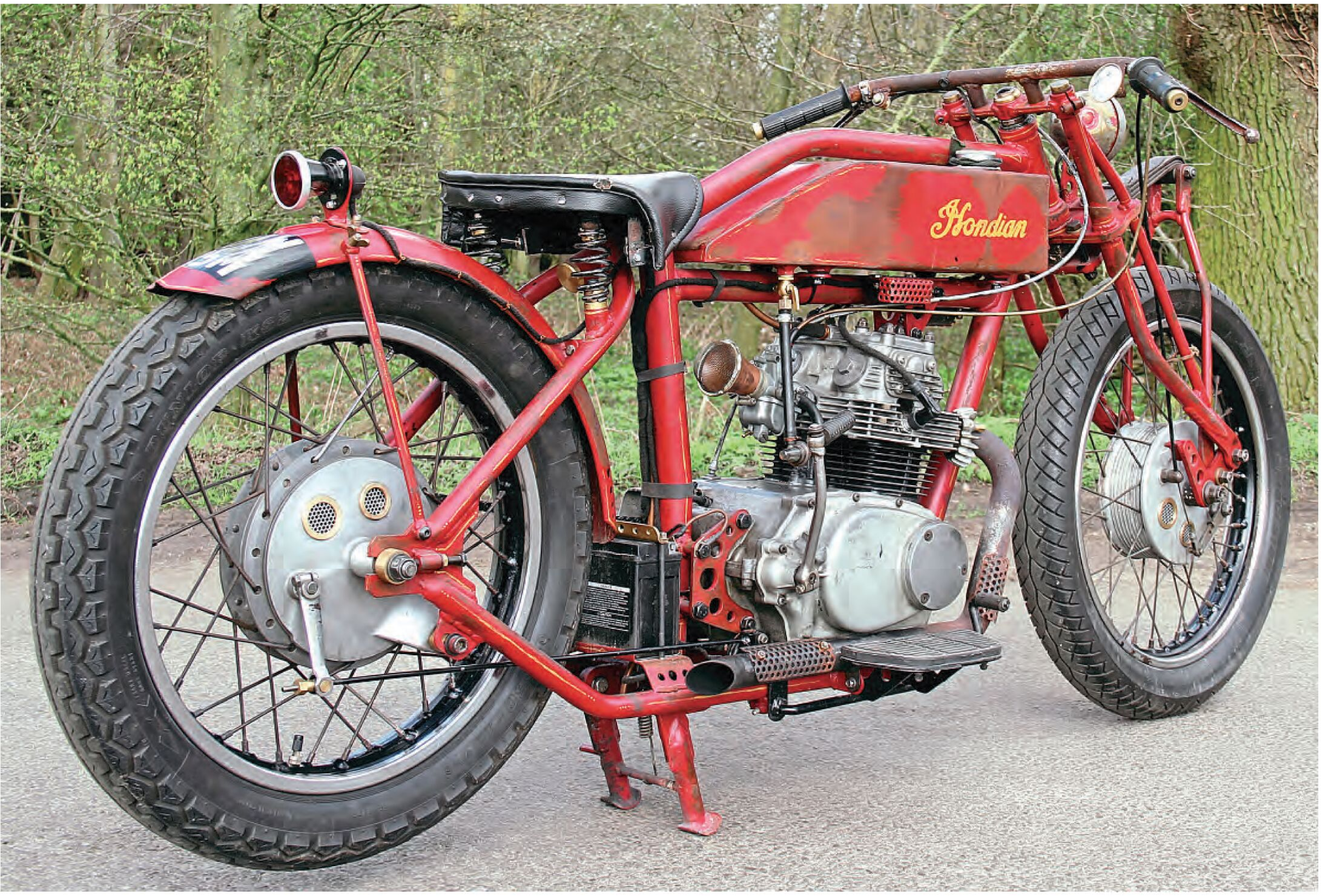
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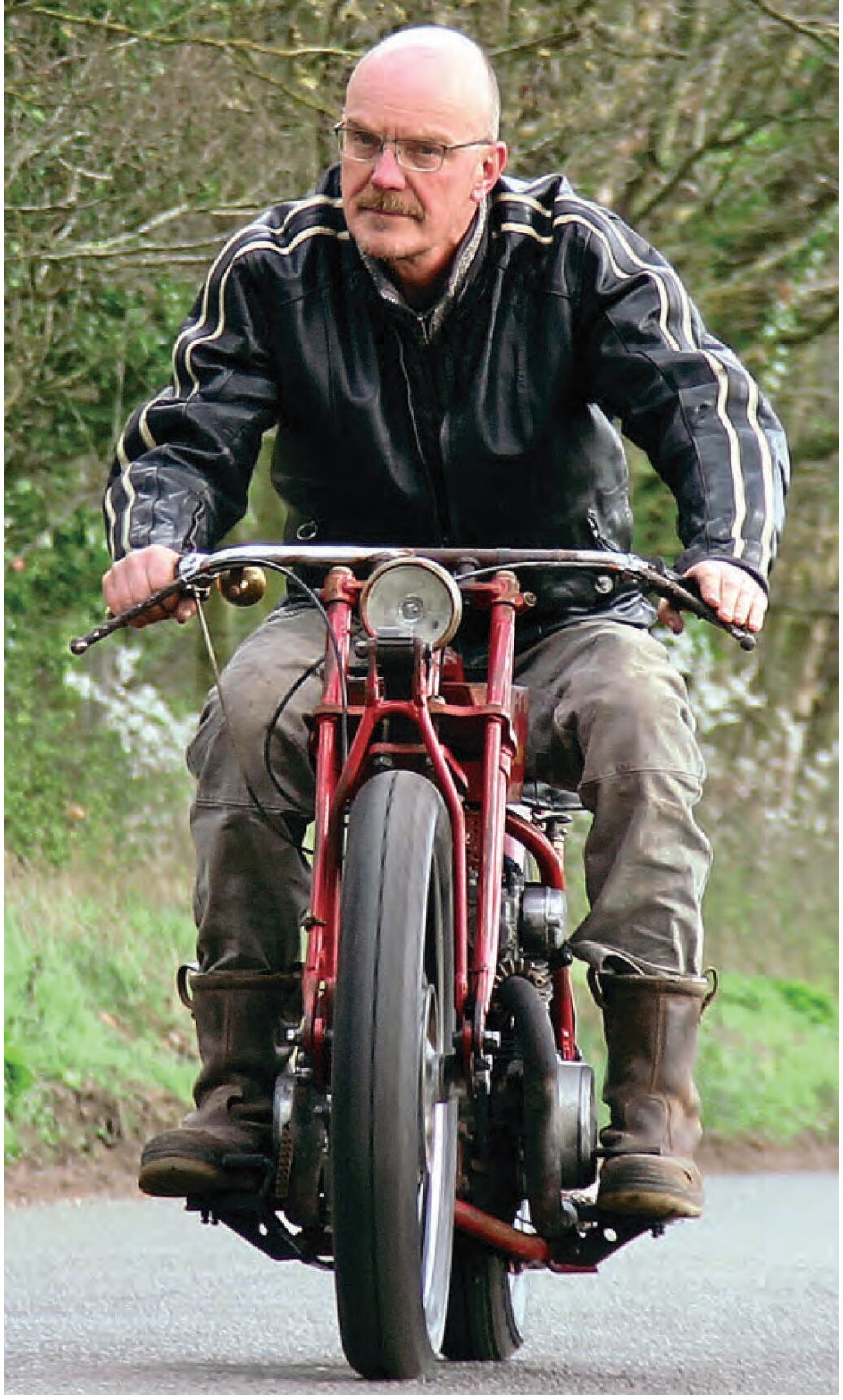

AT the Ace Cafe a couple o' three years ago, at one of NCC London's excellent Diamond Day custom shows, I saw, from the other end of the car park, an old looking, but obviously custom, bike roll in, and thought 'Ooo!' and set off towards it. On the way over, though, I got distracted, by someone or something ('squirrel!'), and by the time I got to it, the rider'd buggered off. 'Mmm,' I thought, 'that's bloody clever – leaf-spring front end on a little Honda single, done as a flat-tanker… it looks… I wonder, like something Matt'd build' and looked around for him 'cos I know he's been to Diamond Day a few times and, relatively speaking, he doesn't live that far away. A few minutes later I spotted him mooching along a line of bikes, checking out this and that, so made me way over and said: "I bloody knew that (the Hondian as he calls it) was yours!"

He's had a few bikes now in custom bike magazines over the last few years, both 100% Biker and BSH, the most recent of which was the glorious 350 Ariel in issue 485. He's a quiet, unassuming, softly-spoken chap who turns out some amazing bikes from the garage next to his house, but doesn't really make a fuss about them. This one came about because he'd always had a hankering for an old, as in 1920s era, flat-tank motorcycle, but really couldn't justify spending the kind of money an original one'd set you back, not to mention the potential unreliability and cost of any spare parts required. Clearly then, to his mind, the thing to do was manufacture some kind of replica, but use a more modern, reliable engine.

Initially he was going to use a v-twin engine, probably a small-capacity one. He toyed with the idea of a 250 Virago Yam, as one o' those'd've fitted the bill nicely, but balked when he saw the price of one, not wanting to spend that sort of money on something he was only going to cut up. Then a CD175 Honda engine turned up on a mate's scrap pile, and was secured for just £20 – the decision was made, that's what he was using.

Closer inspection revealed that it was, in fact, a bit of a hybrid with a CD head n' barrels on a CB bottom end – something that he felt gave him the best of both worlds: a five-speed gearbox as opposed to the CD's four, and a single carb head (CBs have dual carbs) for a more period look and smoother running. It was treated to a rebore and new pistons but was, otherwise, in good working order.

He'd also always fancied a leaf-spring front end, a la those made famous by the Indian Motorcycle Company (1901 to 1953) on their 1924-1945 Chief models, and a number of years ago'd found a nice set of leaf-springs on a wrecked trailer whilst nosing around in a derelict barn. He'd 'liberated' them, knowing they'd come in handy one day, and they'd been stored under his bench since. For this bike he decided to make an Indian-style front fork, and was pointed in the right direction by his mate Tony Groom (himself no stranger to a bit of custom spanner twiddling), and using a host of old pictures for reference, handcrafted the one you see here in front of you using half of one of the trailer springs. Incidentally, I don't know if you know, but leaf-spring technology can be traced, apparently, all the way back to the Bronze Age (2,000 BC to 700BC), first used on horse-drawn chariots, and made from layers of (no shit…) bronze.

SPEC:
Hybrid Honda 175cc engine (CD175 top-end on CB175 bottom end, one-off air-filter, one-off exhausts), one-off single-down-tube rigid frame (31-degree rake/ 5-inch trail), H-D Road King pillion foot-boards on one-off mounts, Triumph pre-unit 19-inch front wheel/ drum brake (added ventilation holes), one-off leaf-spring front suspension (Oilite bushes on shouldered bolts on all pivots), one-off petrol tank with brass cap/tap, Lycett saddle, Triumph rear mudguard (modified), one-off battery tray, early Yamaha RD rear wheel/drum brake (added ventilation holes), minimal loom, autojumble headlight, repro' vintage rear light

FINISH:
Rustypaint/Indian red/pinstriping/ graphics by owner

ENGINEERING:
Bike built & all work by owner

THANKS TO:
"Tony Groom for fork construction advice/donation of front tyre; & Darren Buckley for the engine & mudguard…"

Anyway, with the leafer forks made, designed to accept a 19-inch pre-unit Triumph (front) wheel, enhanced with extra ventilation/cooling holes in the drum brake body, he then fabricated a suitably olde-worlde tank (described, somewhat unkindly I feel, as 'something of a bread-bin under the top tube'… not Matt's one in particular, I must stress, just flat-tanker tanks in general), adding a brass cap and fuel-tap he'd picked up on his forays into autojumbles, and then, with an early RD Yamaha rear wheel n' drum brake (again, modded with extra 'oles) for t' back, set about making a frame with a top-tube that went over the tank in the correct style.

Once that was done (he says blithely glossing over months of hard work…), he was really pleased with the way the bike looked. At this point he could've given it a suitably era paint scheme and I'm sure it'd've looked great, but he wanted it to look like a genuine barn find, so some parts were left in the garden to rust, and most of the others were painted in Rustypaint (a product that rusts instantly when sprayed with an activator – you get it from www.rustypaint.com), followed by a coat of Indian red, rubbed back suitably. The result, as you can see, is that it does indeed look like it's been recently dragged out of a barn and just got running.

He reports the bike rides really well and handles nicely, probably helped by its reasonable rake and trail (31 degrees and five inches), and it's been ridden to various bike meets/shows over the summer where it usually causes a mixture of amusement and confusion. It's picked up a pot or two as well – which it deserves to!

NIK

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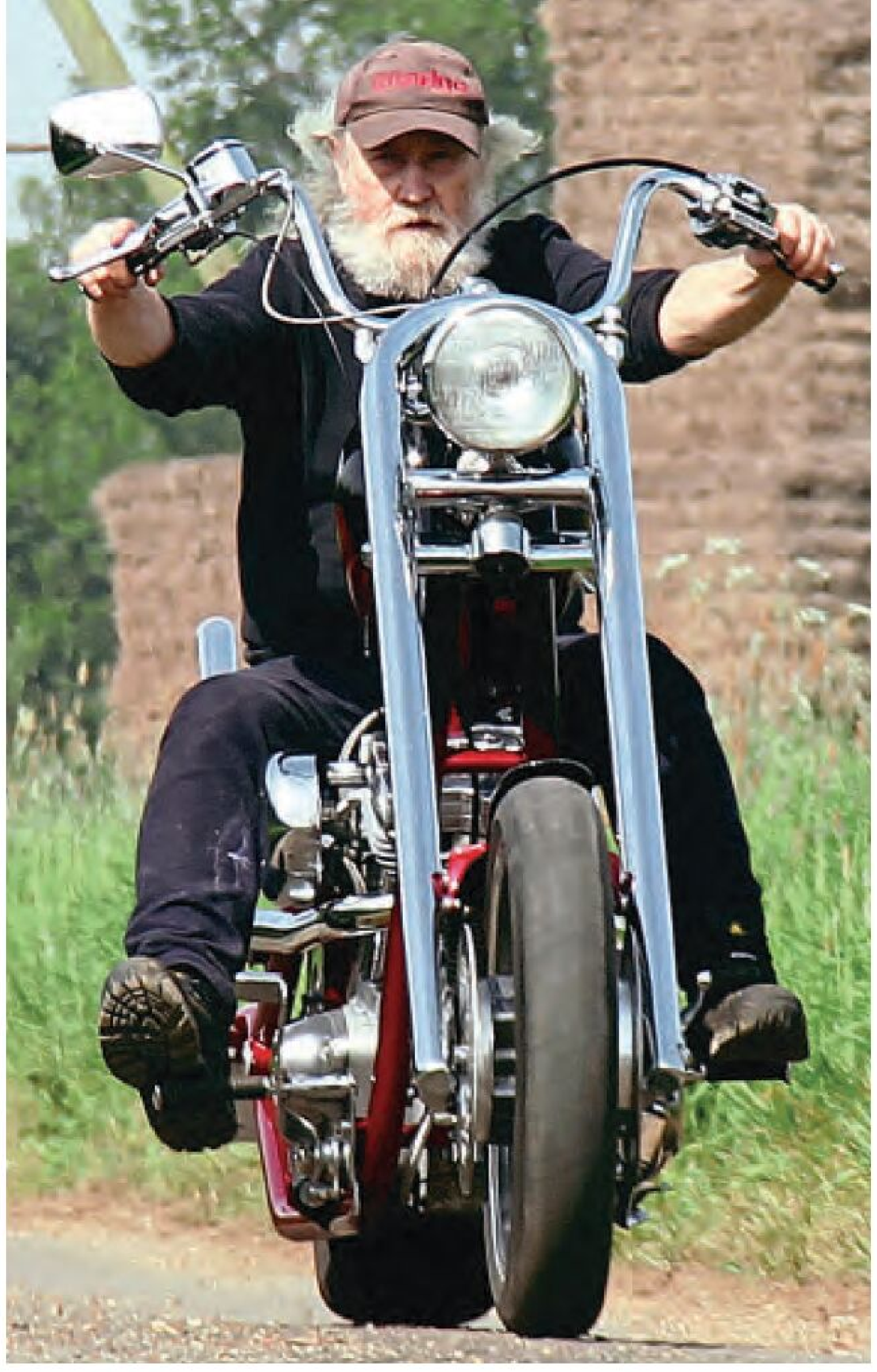
'ERE, MIST

ER, YER FORKS'RE FUNNY...

I DON'T KNOW IF YOU'VE EVER REALLY GIVEN ANY THOUGHT TO THE FORK/FRONT SUSPENSION ARRANGEMENT ON THE BMW GS, AND OTHER, MODELS? IT MAY LOOK, AT FIRST GLANCE, AS THOUGH IT'S JUST A CONVENTIONAL RWU (RIGHT-WAY-UP) TELESCOPIC FORK SET UP AND, AS MANY OF US HAVE NO INTEREST IN HUMUNGOUS ADVENTURE BIKES WITH A SEAT HEIGHT THE SAME AS GODZILLA'S INSIDE LEG MEASUREMENT, THAT MAY BE AS MUCH AS YOU'VE LOOKED, BUT IT REALLY ISN'T.



IT is, you see, a system called Telelever, and uses a single shock unit in place of the combined spring/shock functions of traditional forks. It still has forks, but their primary function now is to make a stiff frame for the wheel to sit in, and to allow the rider to steer the bike (always useful), as the shock unit's connected to a wishbone, itself connected to the bike's frame via a yoke at the back, and to the crossmember of the forks at the front using a ball-joint. When you hit a bump, then, the suspension forces're transmitted through the ball-joint, across the wishbone, and up through the shock into the frame, and this means you effectively reduce fork flex under braking to near zero which, in turn, reduces dive, too. Clever, eh? The thing is, BMW didn't invent it – no, they 'borrowed' the idea from a Scotsman…

Norman Hossack was born in Scotland, but went to school in Rhodesia, and started his working career as an apprentice in a Ford dealership. He soon made a name for himself as a talented engineer, and moved into motorsport, primarily with cars (he worked for Lotus, and McLaren, and was a mechanic at three Indianapolis 500 races, and a race engineer/planner at the Le Mans 24-Hour Race, too), but was into his bikes, and raced a 250 Ducati (and remembers being lapped three times in a 20-lap race by the legendary Mike Hailwood), and left the world of four wheels to concentrate on bikes, building a groundbreaking two-stroke engine, and the Hossack double-wishbone suspension system that he's best known for. He patented it back in the '70s but, apart from a few (successful) race bikes and one-offs, didn't really do anything with it much and, when the patent expired some 25 years later, it wasn't that long after the BMW Telelever front end appeared.

There've been, as far as I know, only two custom bikes in this country with front ends designed using variations on Mr Hossack's ideas: Rob Bowyer's wonderfully over-the-top Illogical Progression single-sided survival bike, and this – Briz from CCD (Custom Cycle Developments)'s long-fork Harley. Back in 2008, he decided he needed another project as he'd recently done a good deal on an 1340cc Evo' lump. It was at about this point he remembered being intrigued by some of Norman's drawings in MCN years and years before, and therefore conceived a plan as cunning as a fox that used to be Professor of Cunning at Oxford University, but has moved on and is now working for the U.N. at the High Commission of International Cunning Planning*, and taking inspiration from them, made a bunch of drawings for a chopper version and worked out all the geometry.

He wanted a big-tube oil-in-frame rigid with the battery under the gearbox so the area under the seat'd be empty so he could thread the rear exhaust through there and, serendipitadly (is that a word? Probably not…), when he made his frame jig (46 years ago now!) he'd made the headstock cradle using long studs to hold it in alignment while it was welded up – these holes now came in handy to locate the two needed pivot tubes (a Hossack front end has no headstock, instead it has two pivot tubes for the wishbones to… er, pivot on), and the bottom, load-bearing, one, which also actuates the Pro-Tech shock, has a bottom ball-joint from a Chevy truck, while the top one has some random omne he got at an autojumble somewhere. Originally he was going to make the long, long forks girder-like, but had a bit of leftover two-inch tube that'd been bent almost back on itself, so he warmed it up and pulled it around to a full 180 degrees and, much welding 'nd fettling later, had a full front end.

He'd decided from the start this wasn't going to be a big-spend bike, and that's (partly) why it has Japanese three-spoke wheels. The back's off a Kwak ZRX1100 he already had, and the front's an 18-incher off a Honda Pan-European ("I don't like 17-inch fronts on chops"), both chrome-effect powder-coated by Adam at Aeromax. It also had a different 'bar arrangement at first – they were, originally, push-me/pull-yous with two separate 'bars that pivoted co-axially with the bottom wishbone, moving straight back and forth with linkages to the main fork – he'd seen that motorcycle frame/suspension guru Tony Foale'd experimented with them so gave it a go. They didn't work quite as intended, though, as you'll read in a moment.

Anyway, after he'd got the tank, mudguards, and 'pipes sorted, it got put to one side while he did other things for a couple of years. Looking back, he says, he should've put it together in bare metal and tested everything, but he didn't. He can laugh about it now. "I think it's called hubris…" Fast-forward a few years, and he got it built up and running, and it was time for the first test ride. "I didn't even get to the end of the drive – the thing was uncontrollable! What was wrong? The designed-in trail was 80mm, which I checked, so I figured it had to be the handlebar configuration, but I didn't have time to mess about with it, and it got sidelined again. A year later I got it out, and cut a crude bit of plate to fix normal 'bars straight to the forks – not a long-term solution as they'd bob up and down with the suspension, but a short ride showed it was a lot better… I even got to the end of the road this time!"

Another year later he did the job properly, welding a stub post to the frame and making the alloy 'top-yoke' handlebar clamp set up with a single linkage to the forks, carefully positioned to avoid bump-steer. Of course, this buggered up (technical term that) the paint (originally a pearlescent yellow) so he took it apart, had it soda-blasted back to primer, and took it to Bean of Bean's Parts & Paint (probably one of his last jobs in Norfolk before he moved to Lincolnshire), and he made his usual cracking job of the sparkling red n' black:; "It really pops in the sunshine."

Back together, it was through an SVA and registered on the road in 2021, but it was still handling funny, and it dawned on him that it had too-tight headstock bearings – that was it, too-stiff ball-joints. He took them out and cut the Chevy one apart and lapped it, reduced the spring preload and, back together, a lot better – "It's still slightly weird," he says, "but you can sling it round corners fine once used to it, and bad road surfaces don't upset it at all." So, how's the suspension feel then? "Bloody brilliant! Despite the amount of unsprung weight, it soaks up the bumps like a Cadillac… almost makes up for the rigid back end!"

NIK

SPEC:
H-D 1340cc/80 cubic inch Evolution engine (modified heads/ barrels, Andrews EV27 cam, stock CV carb, chrome S&S copy air-cleaner, Clutch: H-D Dyna Twin Cam clutch/ primary (modified), H-D Evo' Softail 5-speed gearbox, points ignition, one-off exhausts), one-off Hossack oil-in-frame rigid frame, H-D Evo Softail forwards (chromed), 120/80/18 front tyre, Honda ST1100 front wheel/ discs, Honda Nissin four-pot calipers, one-off Hossack-style forks, aftermarket 'bars/ grips, late H-D front brake master-cylinder/ switchgear/controls, MMB speedo unit, H-D front mudguard (modified brackets), one-off axed Fatbob petrol tank, one-off seat (upholstered by GB Upholstery), internally-braced Zodiac rear mudguard, Kawasaki ZRX1100 rear wheel, Honda CBR1000 rear disc, Nissin rear caliper, 210/50/17 Metzeler tyre, one-off loom, battery under gearbox, electrics under seat, repro H-D headlight, aftermarket tail-light/ rear indicators, LED strip front indicators

FINISH:
Mazda sparkly red & black by Beans Paint & Parts, wheels chrome powder-coated by Aeromax Coatings (**07960 557057** or **www.aeromaxcoatings.co.uk**), polishing/ plating by Specialised Polishing Services (**01842 762700**) & JD Wyatt Polishing (**01842 766770**)

ENGINEERING:
Owner at Custom Cycle Developments (**07526 094198** or **www.ccd-briz.com**)

THANKS TO:
"All the usual suspects listed above; & Norman Hossack, Tony Foale, & Rob Bowyer for inspiration… although the first two'd probably throw things at me!"

---

*Thanks Baldrick!

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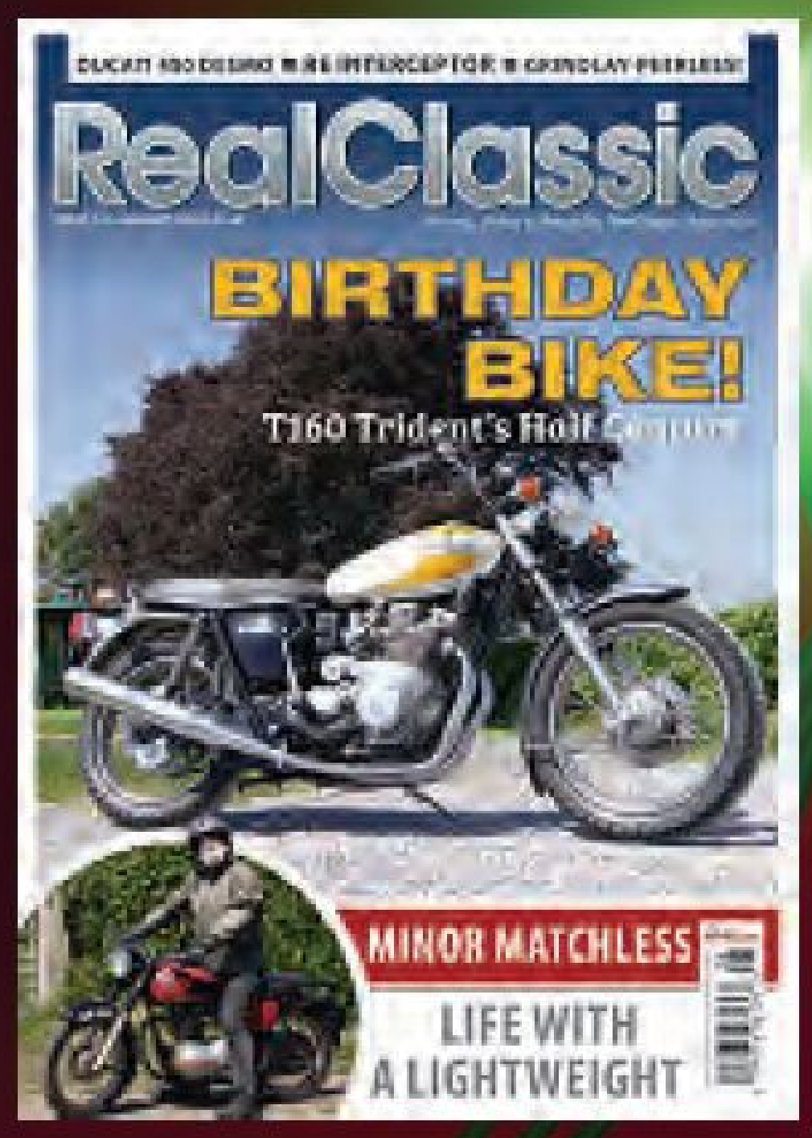

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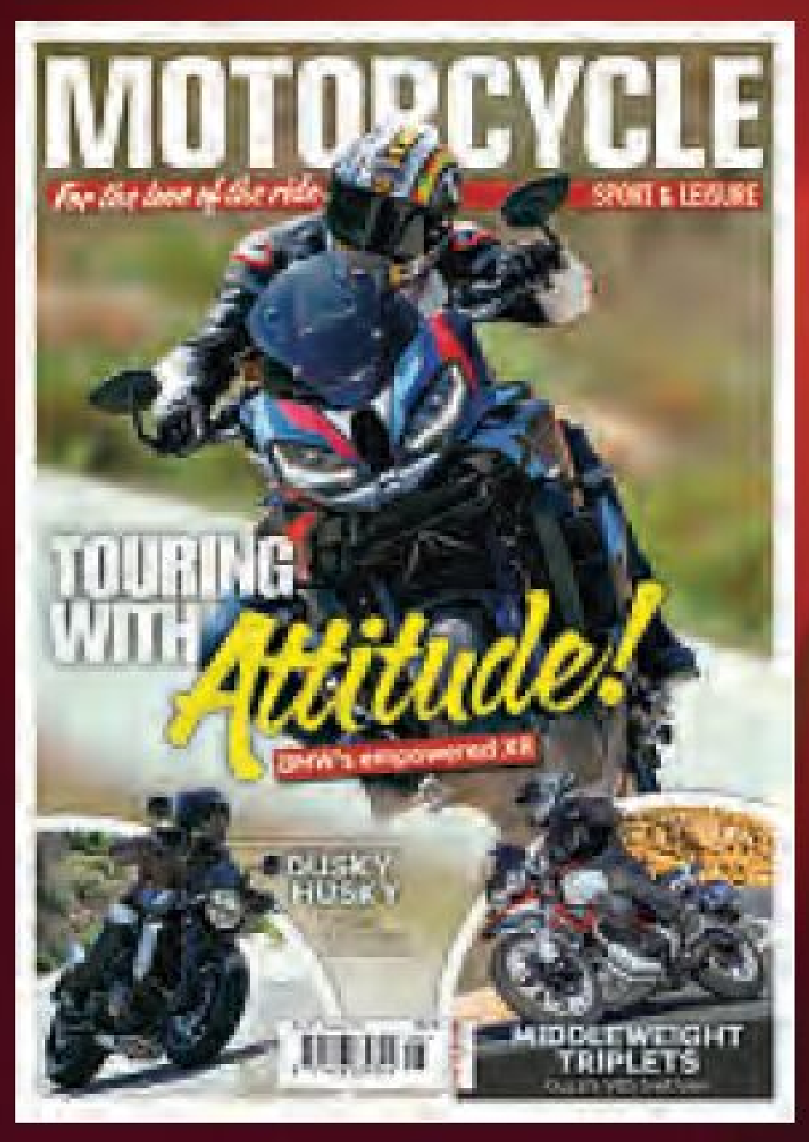

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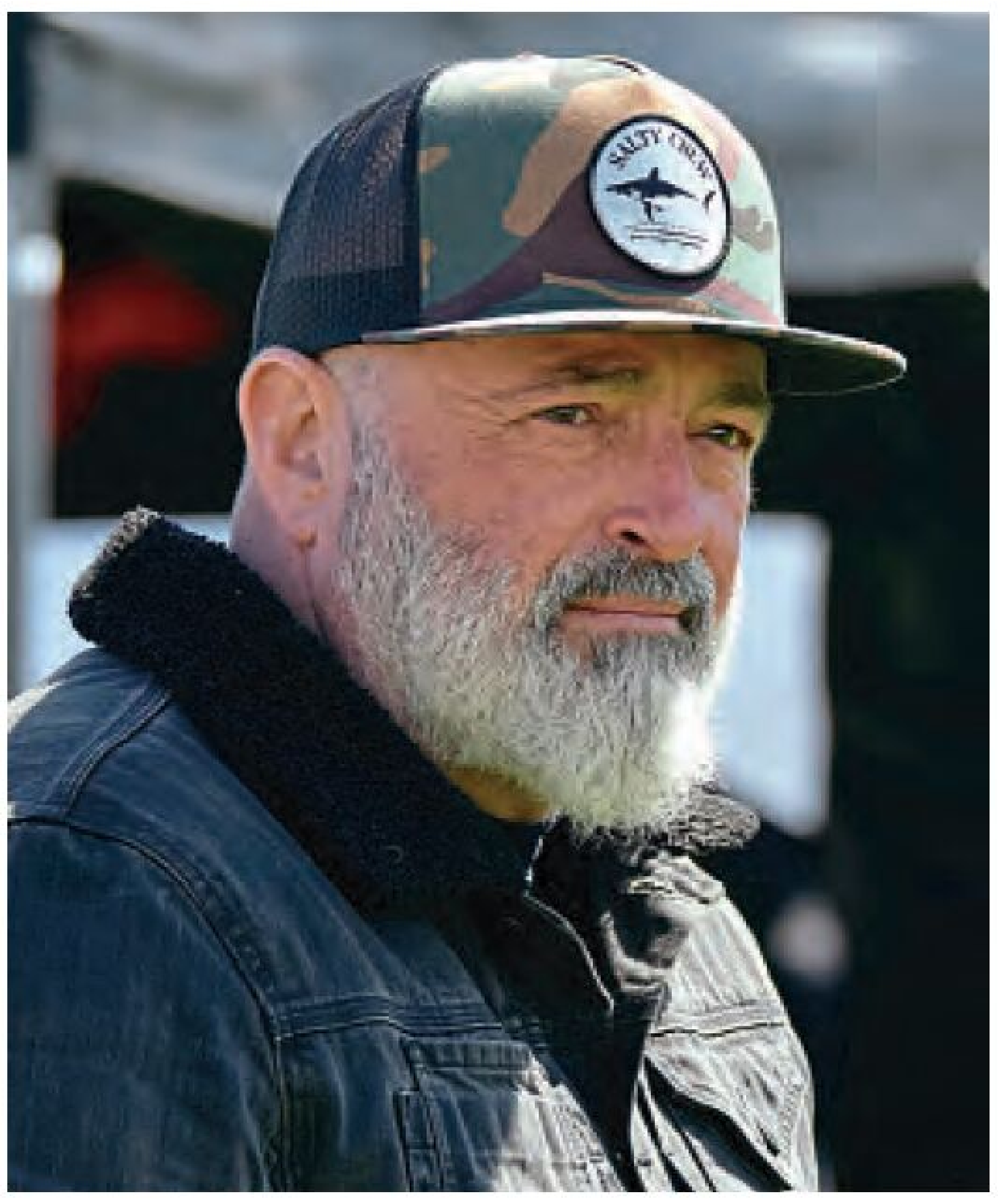
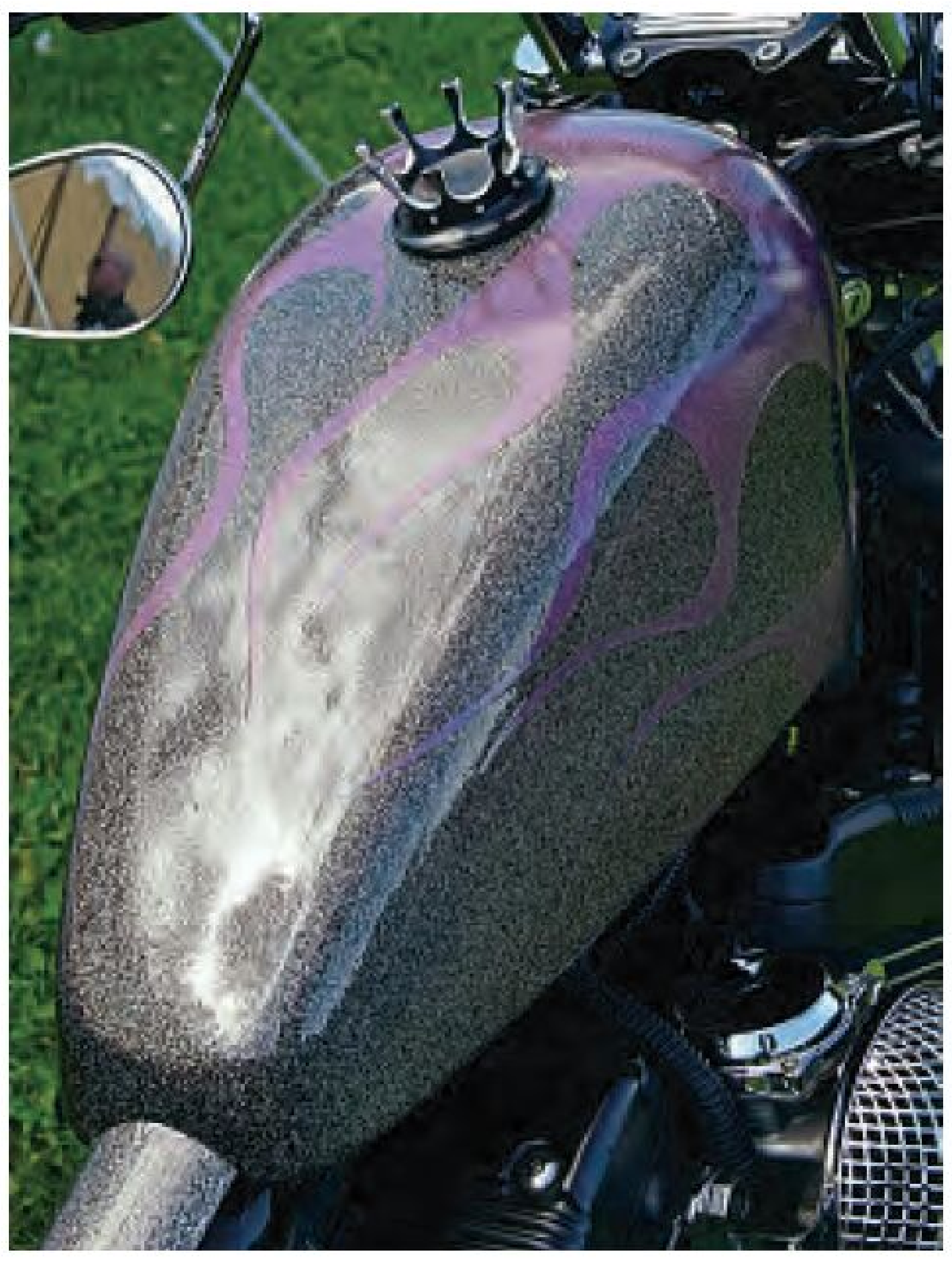
ICE B
Vice President

OUTKAST COMPANY FESTIVAL

WITH A NOTICEABLE DECLINE IN ATTENDANCE AT RALLIES OVER RECENT YEARS IT'S ALWAYS HOPEFUL WHEN A NEW ONE STARTS UP, AS DID THE OUTKAST FESTIVAL LAST YEAR.

MOON
Equipped





After the success of the first one, Mr & Mrs O decided to ramp it up and go for a two-night event this year, with two bands on the Friday night, overnight camping, and another four bands on the Saturday.

Amber Valley Rugby Club was the venue on 7-8 June for the second Outkast Festival. Fortunately blessed once again with glorious weather, there were high hopes it'd be as busy as the first, and included a bike show but alas, although attendance was good, many visitors took advantage of the huge car park and came by car with friends. Ticket prices were a very reasonable £35 for the weekend (£40 on gate), but many chose the day-ticket option at just £20 – sitting in the sun enjoying four bands with a group of your mates and club bar prices, with a designated driver, seemed to be the preferred option for the majority.

The Outkast Company work in partnership with a local MCC, League of Zeal, to put on this festival, and profits go to LoZMCC's registered charity, Lauren's Legacy, to benefit children with cancer. Once again Mrs O put on the food for the event, and they continued their mission to support local and up-and-coming bands. First on stage to get the party started were Jayler, an up-and-coming band tipped for great things in the future, followed by Derbyshire's Fallen Angel whose lead singer Denise Hartshorne really belts out their rock ballads. Music resumed with full-throttle rock on Saturday afternoon with V8, then Indie-rockers Unit 6, followed by punk-rock phenomenon Murder of Crows and, lastly, headliners Red Hot Chili Potters.

Overall, attendance was good and everyone had a good time – it's a great, family-friendly venue, and the charity benefited, but the jury's still out as to whether it'll happen again in 2025 so keep an eye on The Outkast Company Facebook page for further announcements.

LAUREN

Event

WOLFPACK MC YEKNOD RALLY

GOING ON THE INTERNET TO LOOK UP THE MEANING OF A WORD OFTEN SENDS YOU DOWN THE PROVERBIAL RABBIT HOLE AS YOU CAN SOON GET LOST IN THE SIDE-LINKS THAT TAKE YOU FAR, FAR FROM WHERE YOU FIRST SET OUT TO GO…

GOD'S
SQUAD
CMC

TAKE
A
CHANCE

Take looking up the word 'yeknod', as in the name of Wolfpack MC's well-established rally near Chalgrove in Oxfordshire; there're various spurious theories on what it actually means, and links taking you to various related corners of cyberspace, but my favourite was the one that asked, 'What is the meaning of the word yeknod in the Armenian language?' to which the reply was, 'There is no word yeknod in the Armenian language'… Well, I'm glad we cleared that up then. It's not really that surprising, when you think about it, that there's no explanation for the word in Armenian, or any other language either, as, when I asked Crafti from the Wolfpack what it meant, it turns out it's the word 'donkey' spelt backwards as a catchy name for a rally that was originally set up to raise money for a donkey sanctuary. Sometimes it'd be far, far easier to just ask someone, isn't it, rather than venture deep into Internet weirdo land…

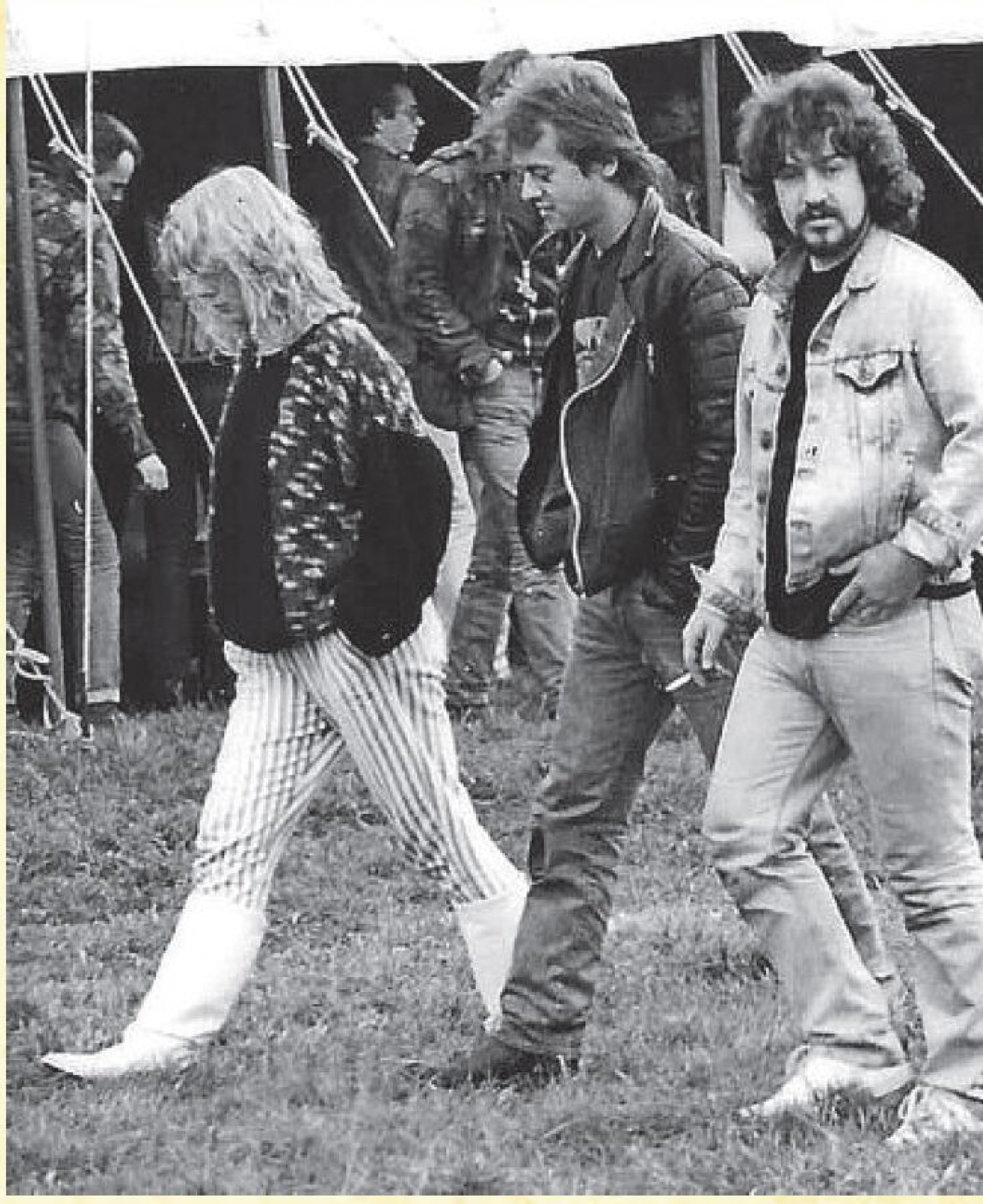
I'd been hearing about the Yeknod for years, right back, I'm sure, from the days when it started when the Wolfpack were an MCC based around Bicester, but I'd never been so, as I had to be in Stratford on the Sunday of the weekend of the rally, thought I'd pop along for a bit. The weather was glorious, and by the time I arrived around noon on the Sat, most people were suitably chilled. There were a smattering of rally stands, an excellent Jamaican food caterer, and a perfect-sized bar with very reasonable prices, and the afternoon promised a number of silly games for members' kids, and a bike show. Four bands'd been booked to play over the weekend (I'm guessing two Friday night and two Saturday night); FBI (classic rock and pop from the '60s-'90s), Quarter Life Crisis (classic and hard rock covers), Mr C's Workshop Band ('biker music by bikers'), and Broken Empire (up-and-coming local hard rock), and a DJ played a variety of suitable sounds for the more sunshine-orientated to sit out in and chill.

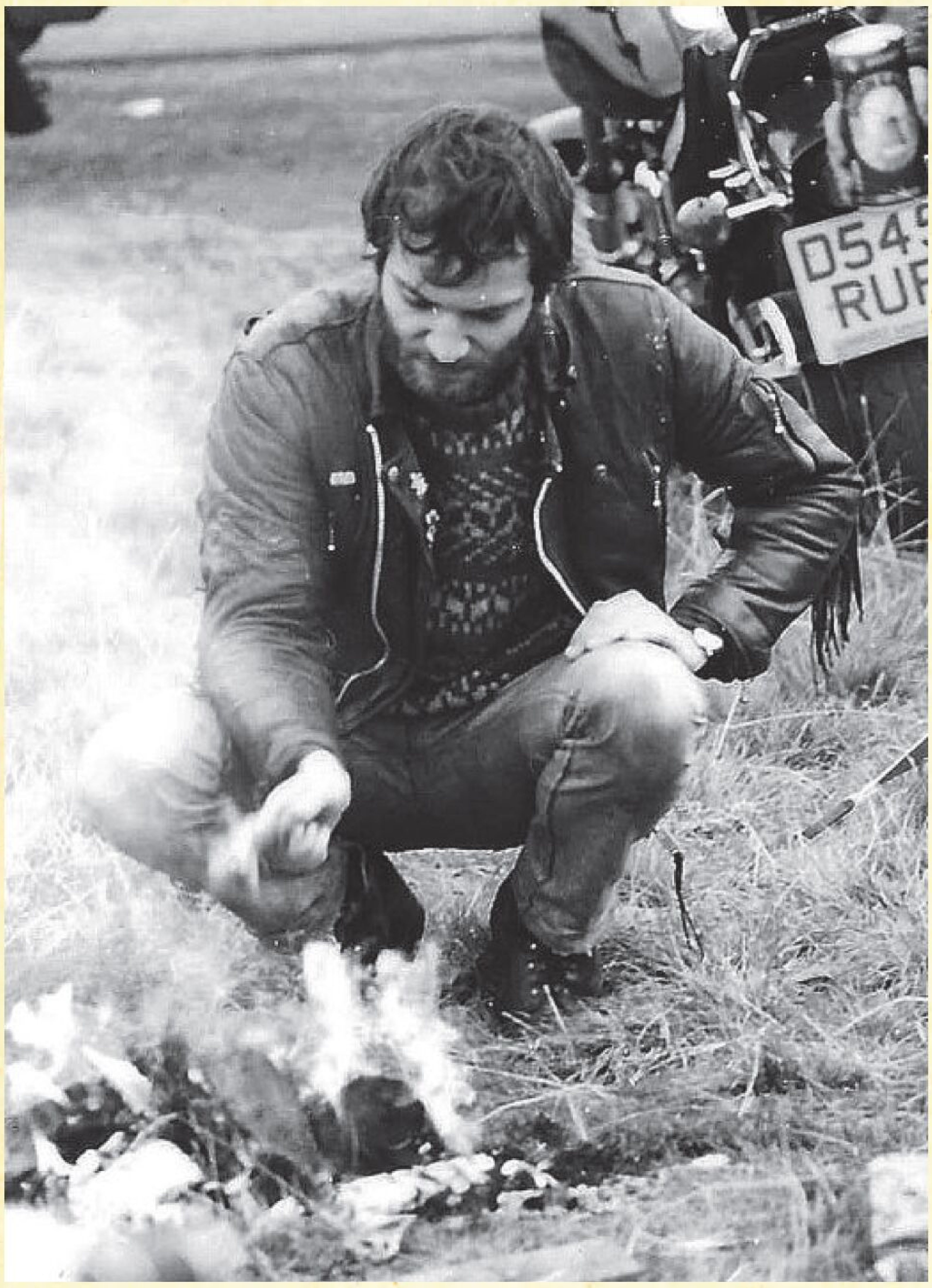
Outstanding bike of the event, for me, was the red oil-boiler (Bandit, I'm guessing) Suzuki chop, although the USD-equipped green Z1000 was nice, too. Most attendees' bikes were big, lazy v-twins, as you'd expect, H-Ds and Japanese variants, and I spent a very pleasant while idly wandering between them, checking out this one and that, talking to folk in the sunshine. That, really, sums up the event, I think – laid-back, chilled, no attitudes, just bikers doing as bikers what we do best. Sadly, as is usual these days, I couldn't stay, but I'd've liked to've done.

The Wolfpack MC'd like to thank everyone who attended and supported them, everyone who donated to the Sands Stillborn & Neonatal Death charity, and everyone who helped put the event on to raise the money for charity. No details at this precise mo' of the dates of the 2025 holding of the Yeknod're available, but keep an eye on the events listings and I'm sure they'll turn up.

NIK

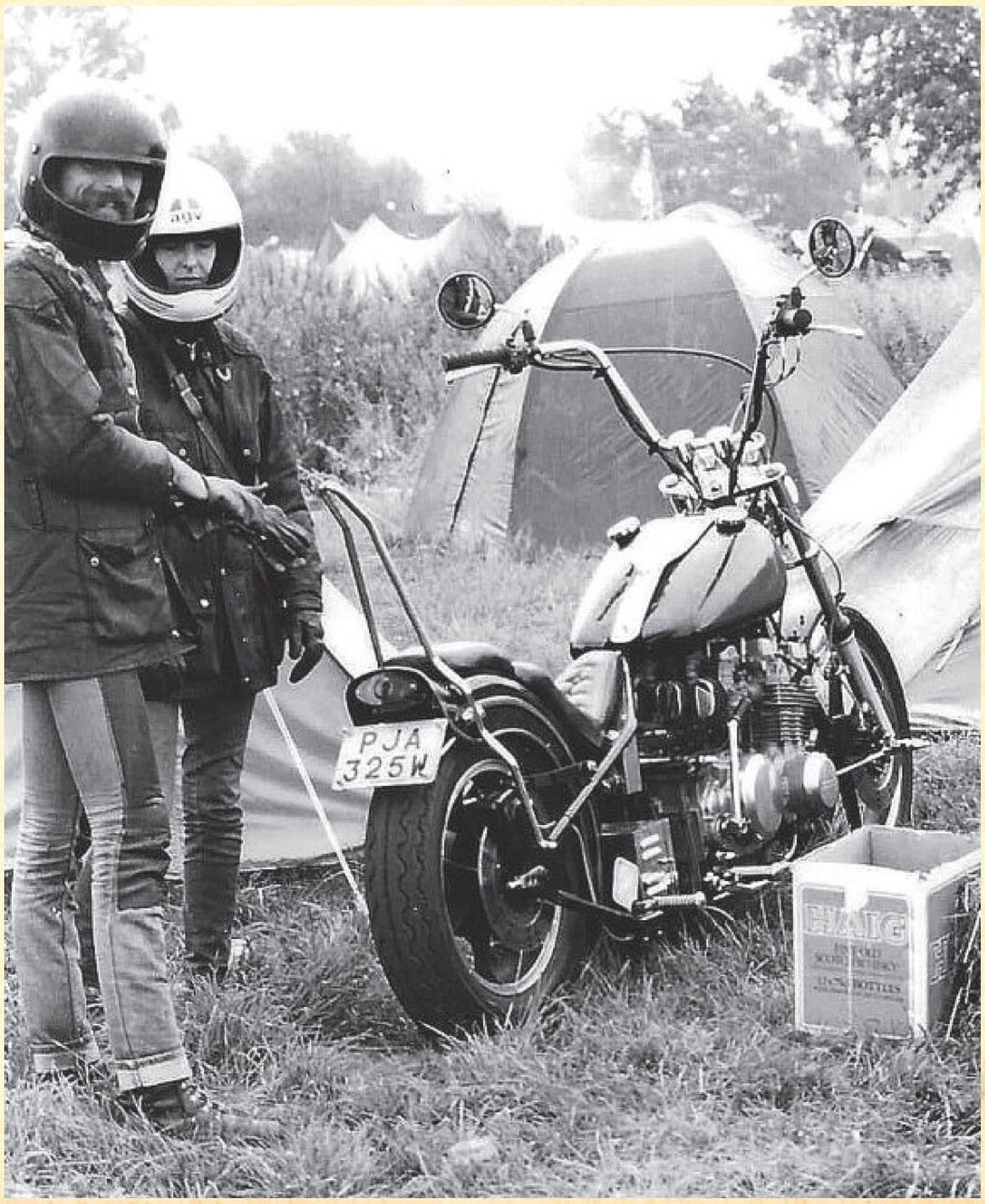
DOWN THE BACK O'...

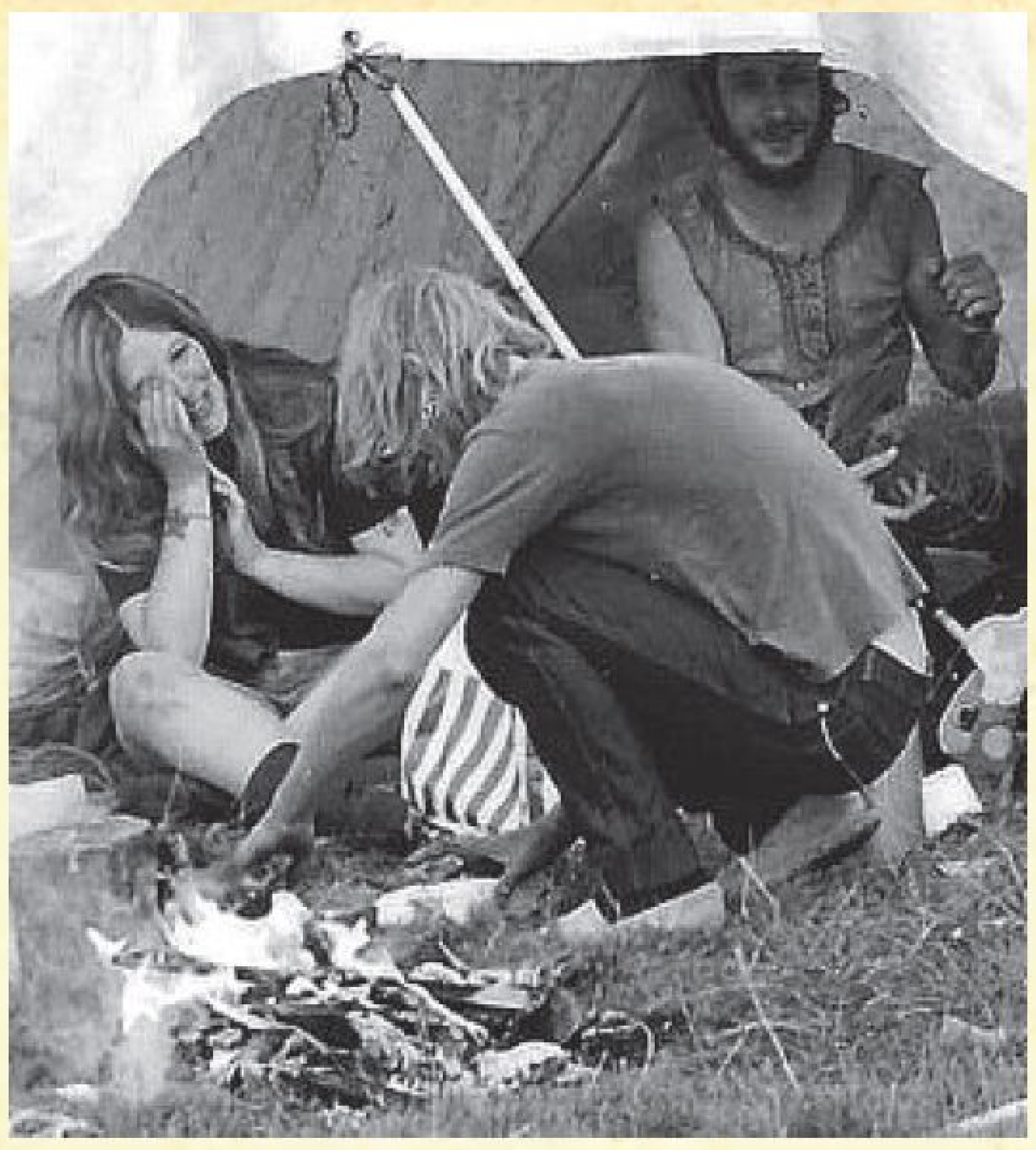


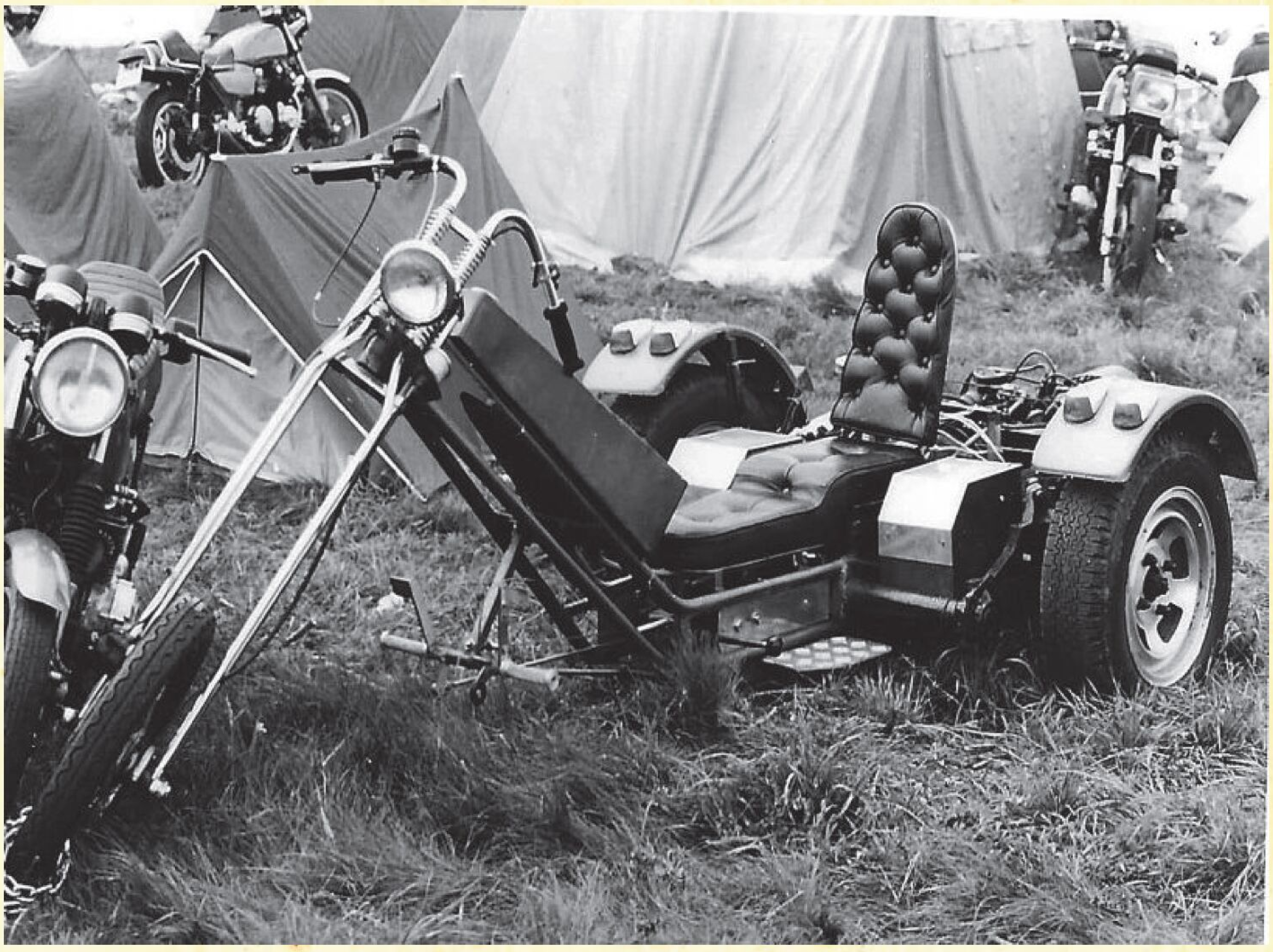


DUC
HONDA
HONDA
GPZ900R

A BOUT EIGHT OR SO YEARS AGO, OUR LAUREN, EX-STAFFER OF THIS PARISH, WAS GIVEN THE UNENVIABLE TASK OF HUNTING DOWN SOMETHING OR OTHER FROM OLD BSH FILES IN A SERIES OF OLD FILING CABINETS. ONE OF THEM WOULDN'T CLOSE PROPERLY, AND SHE FOUND A LOAD OF OLD BLACK N' WHITE PICTURES FROM THE OLDEN DAYS STUFFED DOWN THE BACK OF IT, PUT THEM TO ONE SIDE FOR FUTURE REFERENCE, AND THEN FOUND 'EM AGAIN A FEW MONTHS AGO, SO WE THOUGHT WE'D BUNG A FEW O' THEM IN TO TAKE YOU BACK IN TIME TO THOSE HEADY DAYS – NO CAPTIONS, NO EXPLANATIONS, JUST SOME GREAT OLD PICS FROM THE MAGAZINE'S EARLY DAYS.







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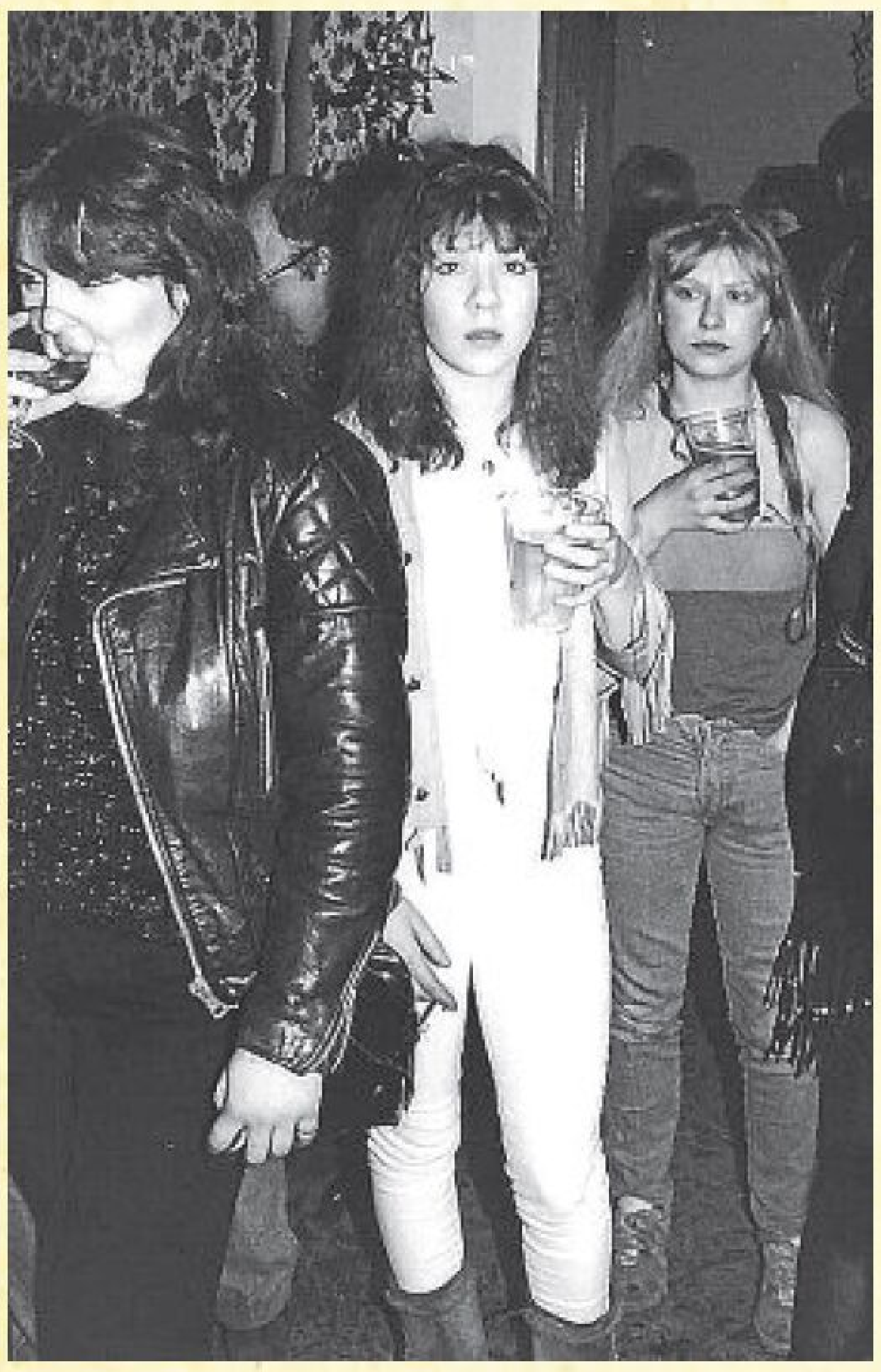
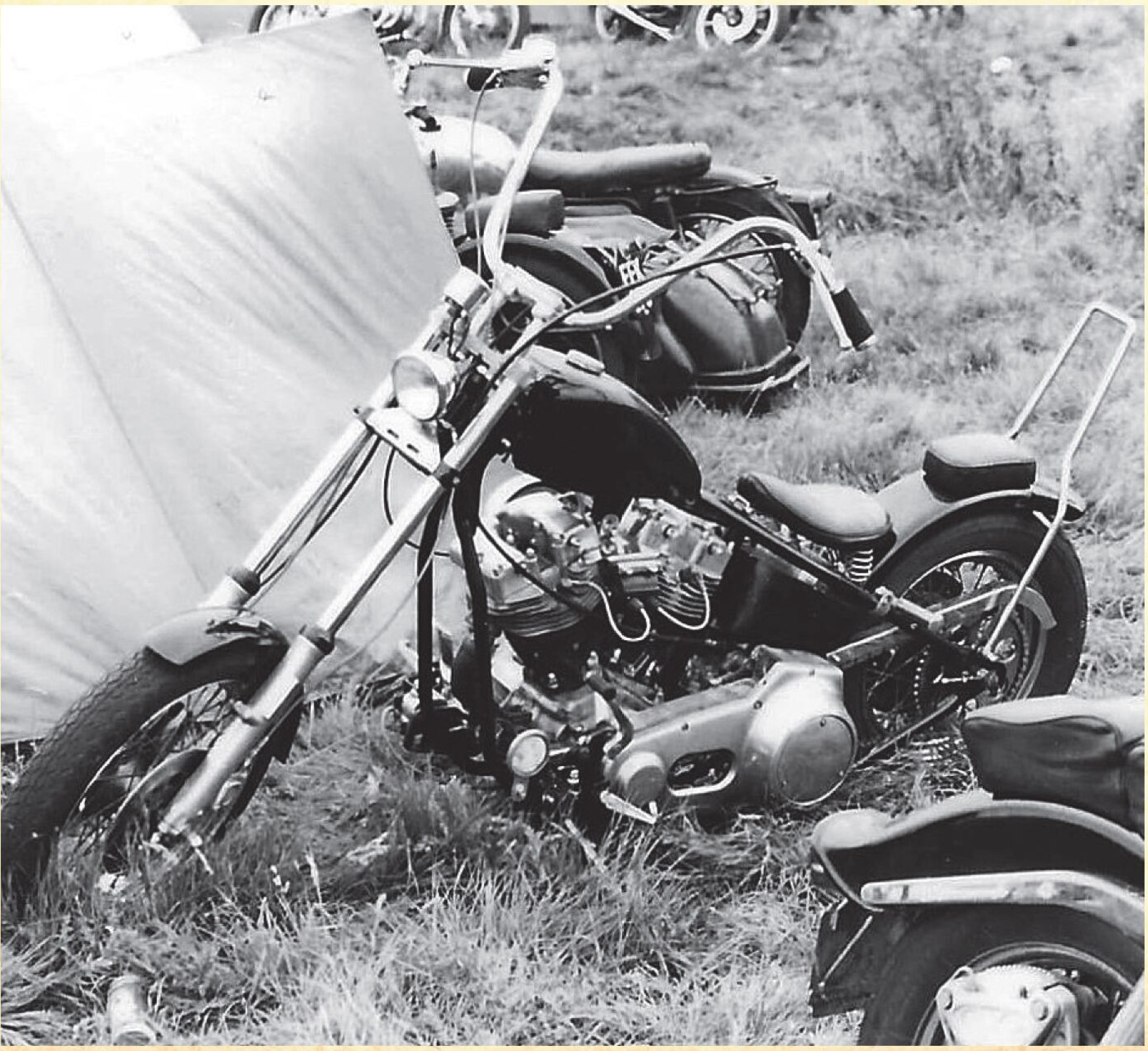
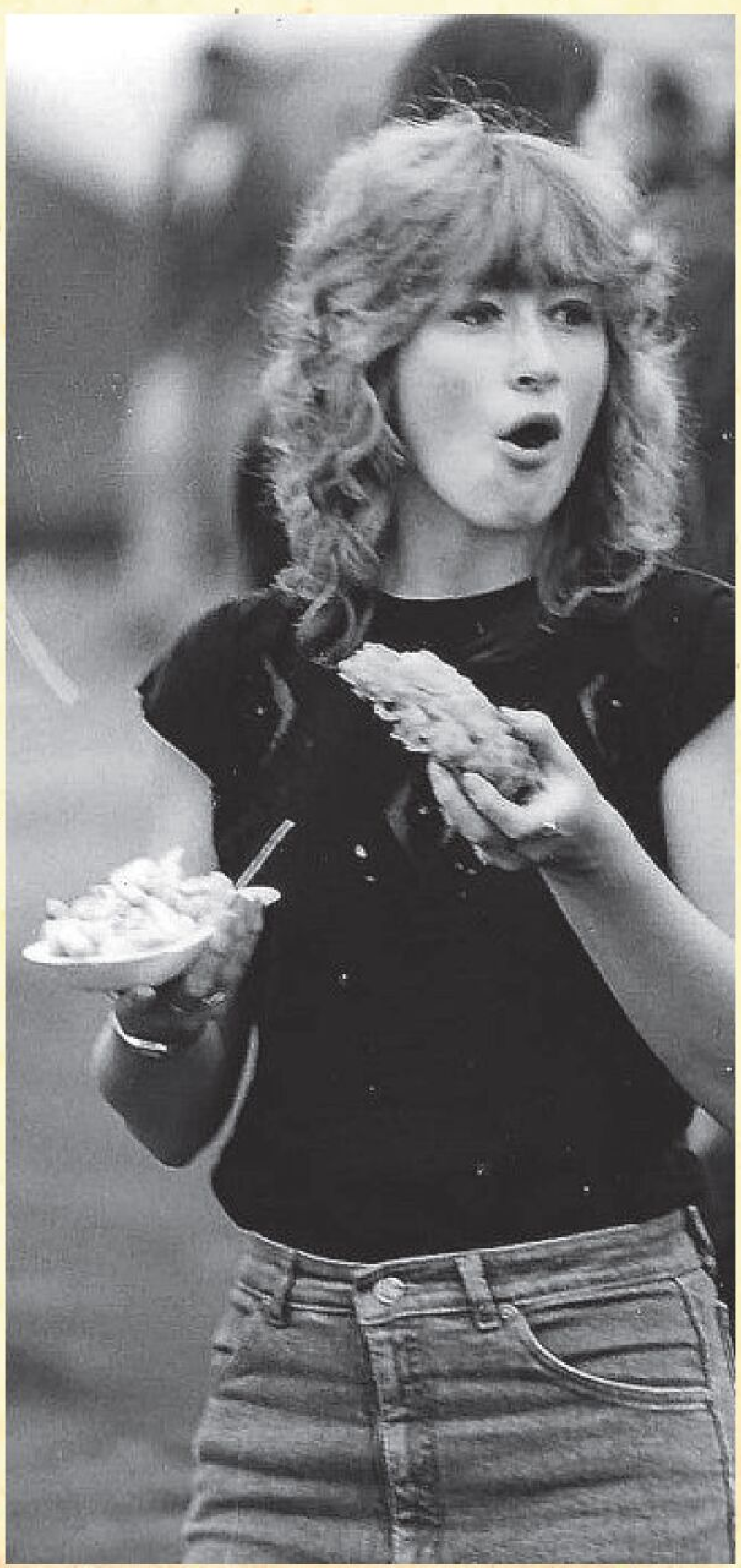
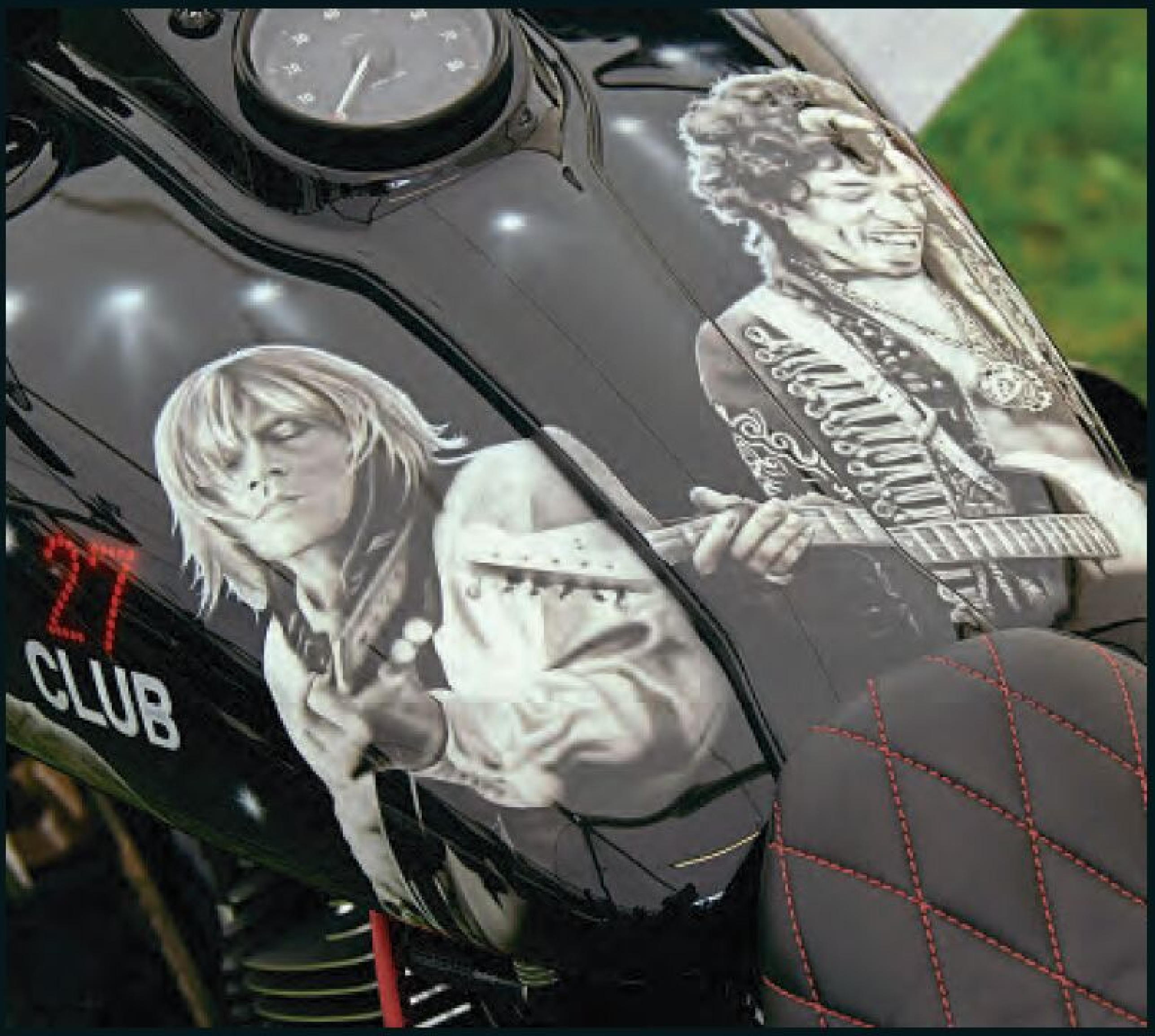
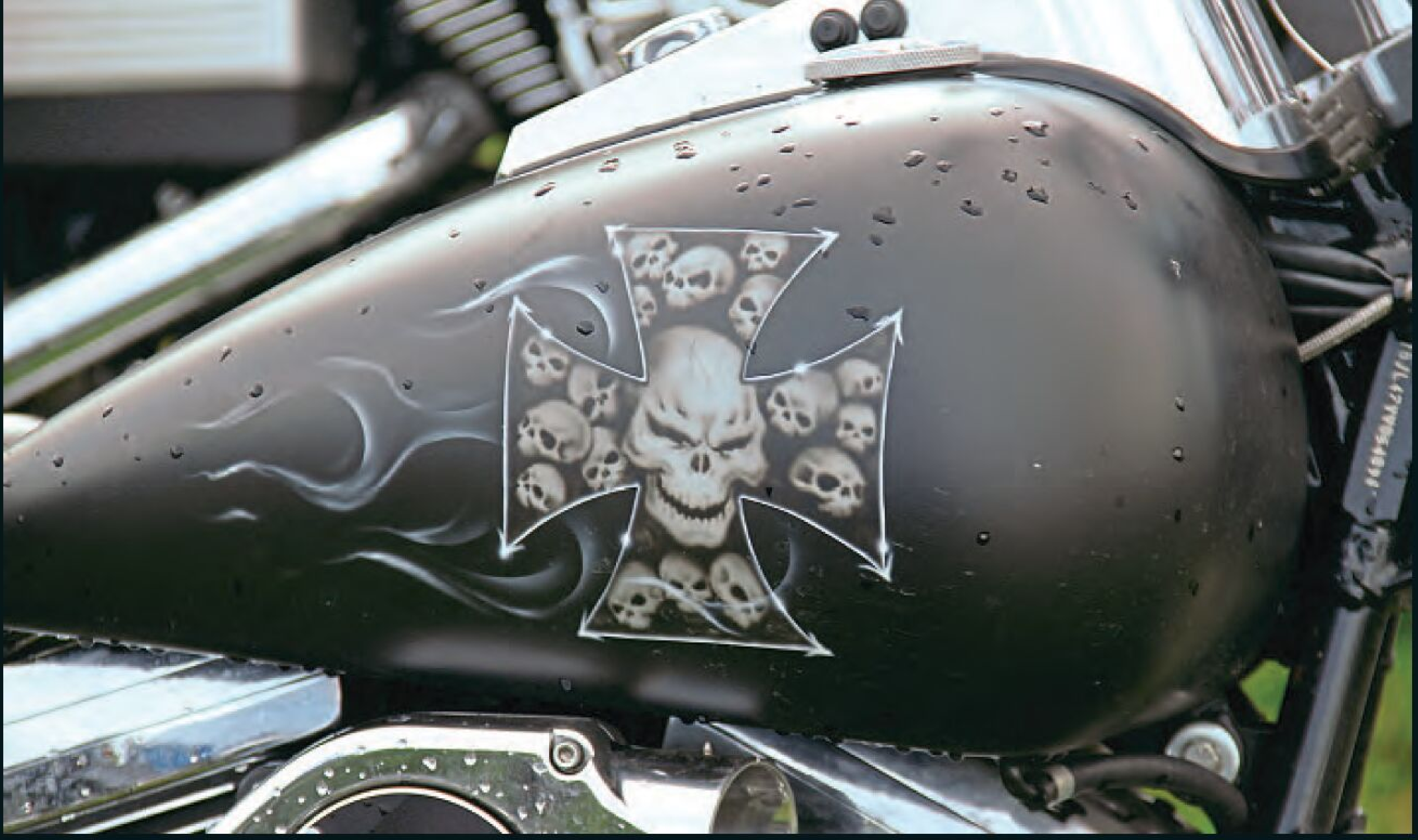
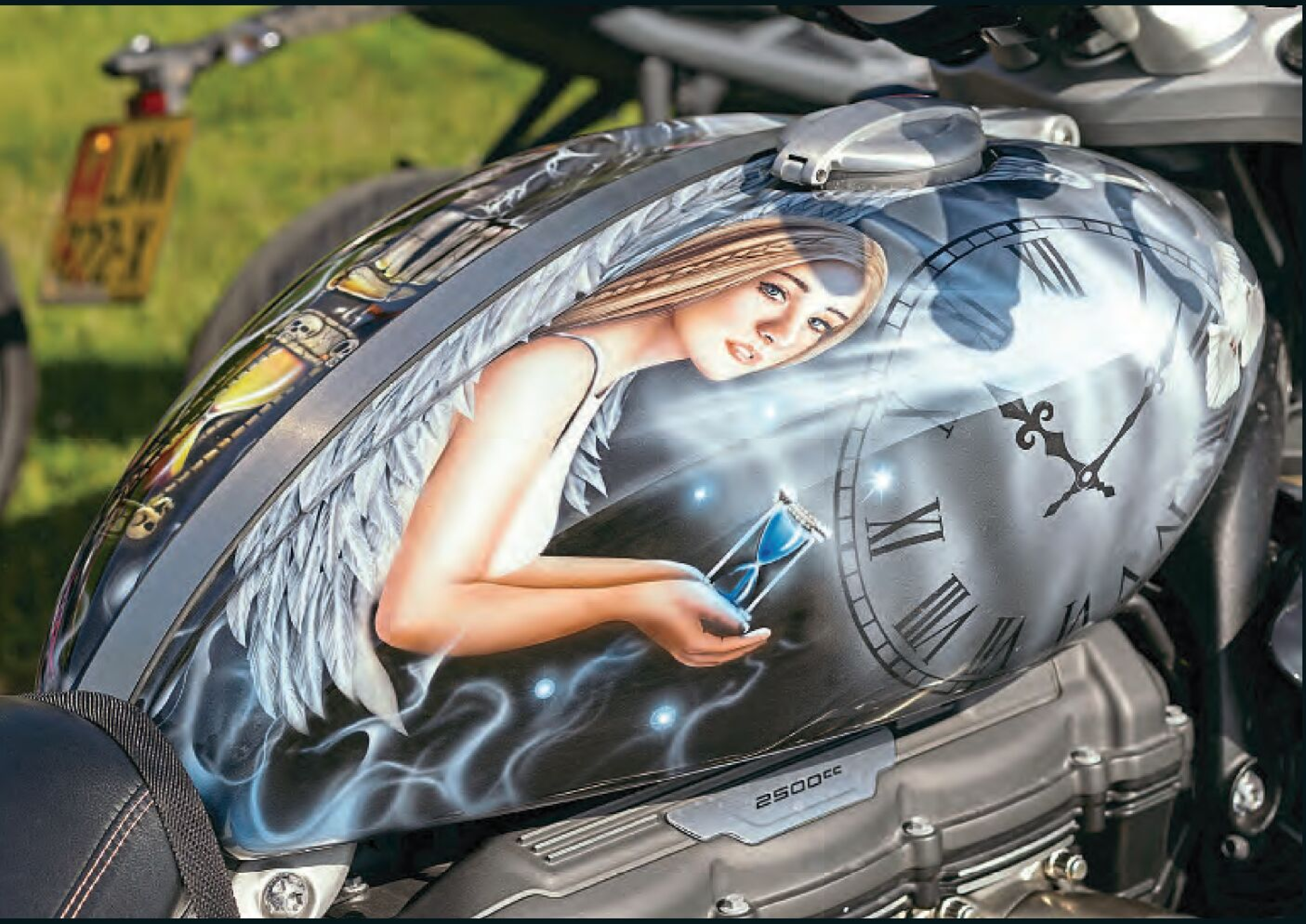


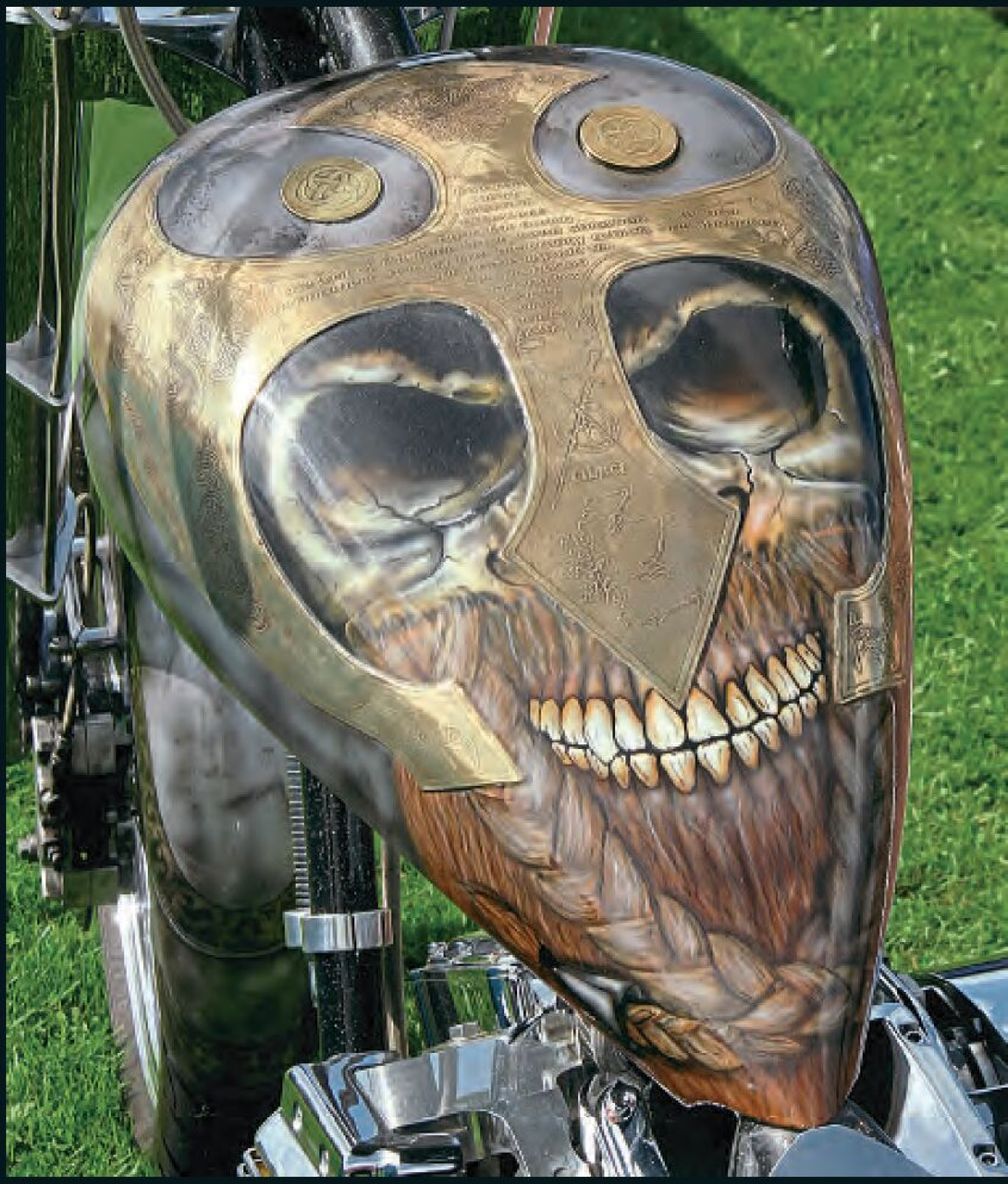




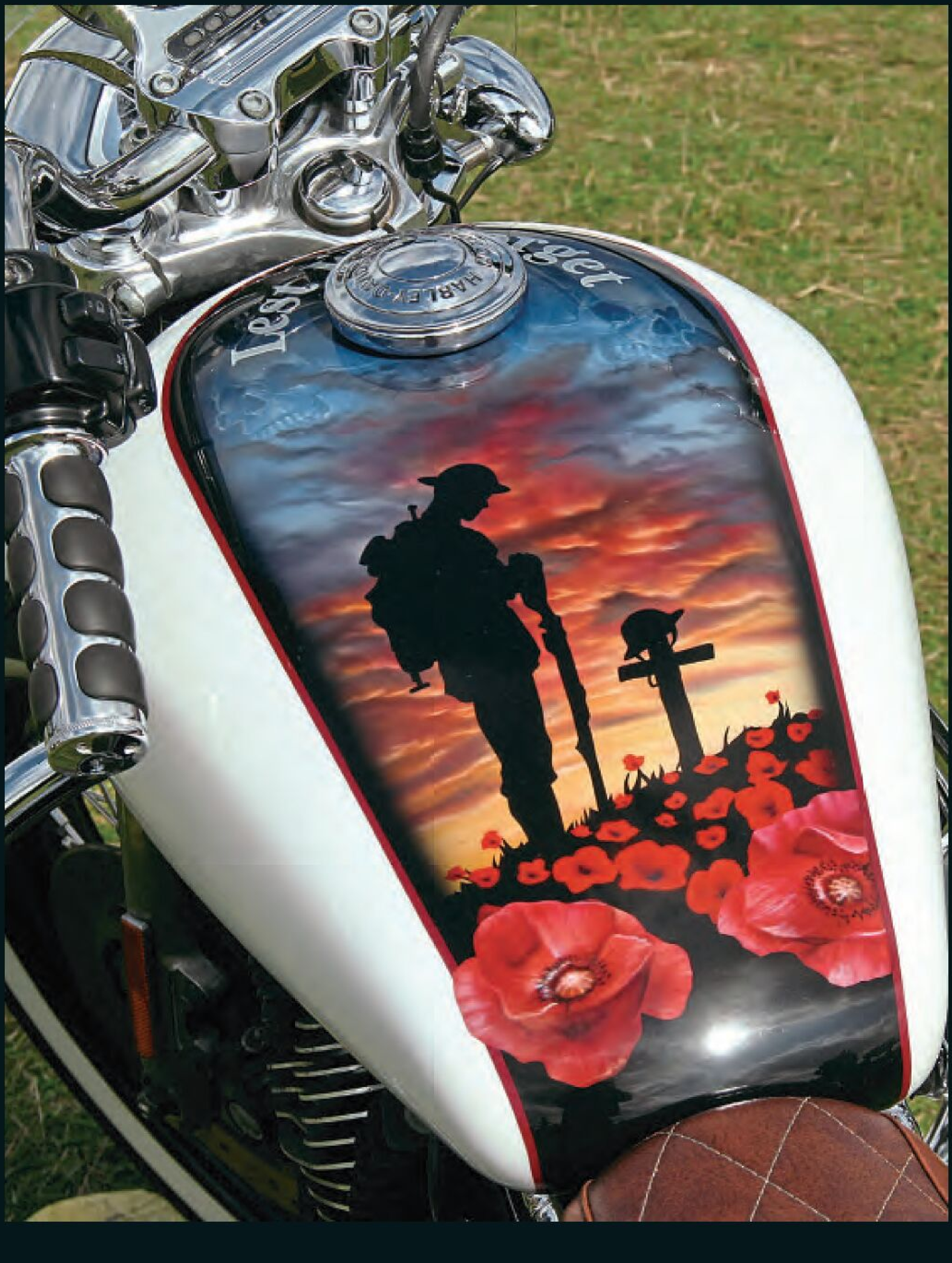








TANK ART



ART IS, AS ALL ARTIST TYPES'LL SAY, SUBJECTIVE – BASED ON, OR INFLUENCED BY, PERSONAL FEELINGS, TASTES, OR OPINIONS, AND OVER THE NEXT FEW ISSUES WE'LL DEMONSTRATE THAT. HERE'RE A FEW MORE TANKS AND MUDDIES SPOTTED THIS AND LAST SUMMER.

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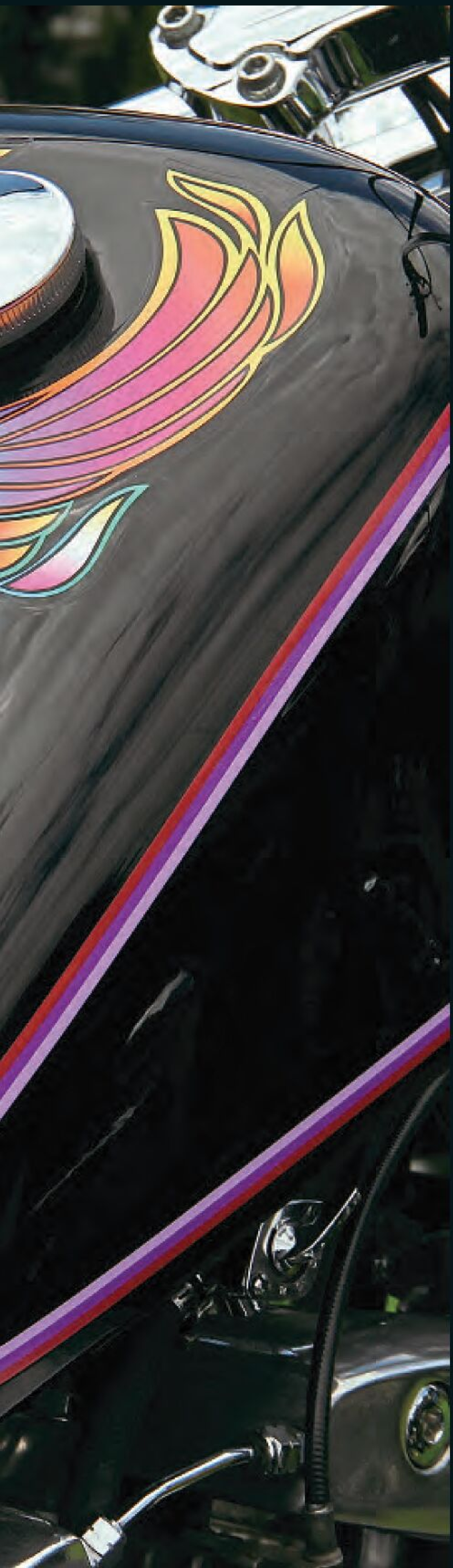


FAT FREDDY'S CAT

REAL WORLD ROADTEST

INDIAN SCOUT 101

THOSE OF YOU WHO'VE NOT YET LEARNT NOT TO READ THE DRIVEL I SPOUT MAY REMEMBER THAT, LAST YEAR, I RODE AN INDIAN SCOUT ROGUE TO WALES (AND BACK OBVIOUSLY), RAC KING UP 1,000 MILES IN A WEEK. IT PERFORMED FAULTLESSLY ON MOTORWAYS, A-ROADS, MOUNTAIN TWISTIES, AND WIDGY LIL' BACK ROADS, TOO, AND I WAS VERY IMPRESSED WITH ITS PERFORMANCE, ITS STANCE, AND ITS LOOKS.

For 2025 (although it is, of course, 2024 as I write this and has been all year), Indian have revamped the Scout range in a rather mahoosive way: new engine, new frame, new suspenders (steady…), new wheels, and new bodywork, managing to keep the feeling that made the Scout Rogue so good, but making it more so.

The new Scouts, of which there're five – the Classic, the Bobber, the Sport, the Super, and the top-spec 101 (pictured) – all run the new 1250cc (up from 1133) engine, dubbed the SpeedPlus 1250.

Although it shares its liquid-cooled, DOHC V-twin layout with the older engine, it's substantially newer with a higher compression ratio (12.5:1, up from 10.7:1), and makes 105hp (up from 94), and 79lb-ft of torque (up from 71.5)… well, the first four do anyway – the 101's engine's got a slightly different ECU map and makes 111hp, and 80.4lb-ft, and pulls that little bit harder as you'd expect.

Similarly, the old alloy frame's been replaced with a new, more traditional, steel tube 'un, and they've also managed to slim down the radiator, despite the bigger engine, to hide it between the front down-tubes, so it looks more like a trad' cruiser, and although steel, as a material, is heavier than aluminium volume-for-volume, it allows thinner tubes to be used so that the new bikes're actually lighter than their predecessors.

Suspension-wise, while the Classic, Bobber, Sport, and Super all use 41mm, non-adjustable, right-way-up forks (with 120mm of front wheel travel), and dual, preload-adjustable, shocks, the 101 has adjustable upside-down forks (with 150mm of travel), and fully-adjustable piggyback shocks. Also it has five-spoke wheels (150/16 rear, 130/19 front), dual 320mm front discs/four-piston radial-mounted Brembos, and a 298mm rear rotor/single-piston caliper, and ABS, natch. Weight? 240kg – not as light as the Bobber or the Sport (although not by much), but not as heavy as the Classic or the Super. Seat height? 654mm (25.7 inches) is low, very low, and, although the seat looks fat, it isn't particularly (Pam, at

5'2", could get both feet down flat).

Ergonomically (them gnomes get everywhere, don't they?), the 101 comes with a small, but very effective, club-style quarter-fairing, low n' flat 'bars, and forwards, so has a riding position akin to, to quote the erstwhile and much-missed Clink, a half-open penknife, and be aware that, because there're no rear 'pegs (or rear seat), you're stuck in that position. I didn't do any really long runs on the 101, unlike on the Rogue last year, so didn't find it uncomfortable and, anyway, if you want a bike for touring, a 101 Scout'd be a bit of an odd choice, wouldn't it? For what it's built to do, both cruise and very possably hoon, the riding position's just right and, indeed, put me in mind of a quote from an old Rich King cartoon (either Gruf or Nob the Destroyer) which I'll paraphrase; "One's ass feels particularly bad on this."

In terms of equipment, if such things're important to you, there's eyeball-bleaching LED lighting; a 101mm circular touchscreen display with GPS and turn-by-turn navigation; configurable readouts and riding statistics; keyless ignition; traction control; cruise control; a USB socket; and three riding modes (sport, standard and tour) to change throttle response. There're also a huge range of options, but we won't go into that 'ere, eh?

So, the riding, 'cos bikes're about the riding, aren't they? The first thing you'll notice, apart from the keyless 'nition, is

MR LETTER'S RIDING GEAR:

RUROC EOX HELMET
www.ruroc.com
CITY OF LEATHER ANTIQUE JACKET
www.cityofleather.com
ROADSKIN TARANIS JEANS
www.roadskin.co.uk
SPADA PILGRIM GRANDE BOOTS
www.spadaclothing.com

the fact that the system takes an eternity to cycle through its run checks (don't do a bank job on one o' these, honestly), and can, but not always, have a hissy fit if you try and start it early. The motor, when you can finally press the button, sounds deep and purposeful, and accelerates the bike quite a lot harder than you'd expect a bike that looks like this to – the maximum legal limit comes up surprisingly quickly, and in a surprisingly low gear, too, and the 101 absolutely revels in being left in third or fourth gear and revved, and'll pass most things on the road whilst doing so. The handling's planted and rock-stable, and it sits exactly where you intend it to sit through corners and roundabouts, even when the 'pegs're making that lovely skkrrish sound as they scrape along the Tarmac (sorry Indian…). The whole lot is wonderfully competent, and a lot more suited to this sort of behaviour than you might perhaps expect. That said, it trickles through traffic perfectly, too, its underslung mirrors interfering with traffic not a jot, and romps away from it safely at traffic lights, too. It's one of the easiest bikes to live with I've been fortunate enough to ride, and looks the part, too – I always found myself doing the quick-look-over-me-shoulder at it as I walked away after parking it, illustrating perfectly the 'If you don't look back at it, you've got the wrong bike' principle.

Prices start, for the 101 Scout, at £16,095 (which's less than I thought it'd be – it definitely feels like it costs more than that), and there're two colour options: Red Metallic (this one), and a rather classy, but more in-yer-face, Ghost White. More information and test rides're available from your local Indian Motorcycle dealer, or Indian themselves. Surf on over to **www.indianmotorcycle.co.uk** to find out more.

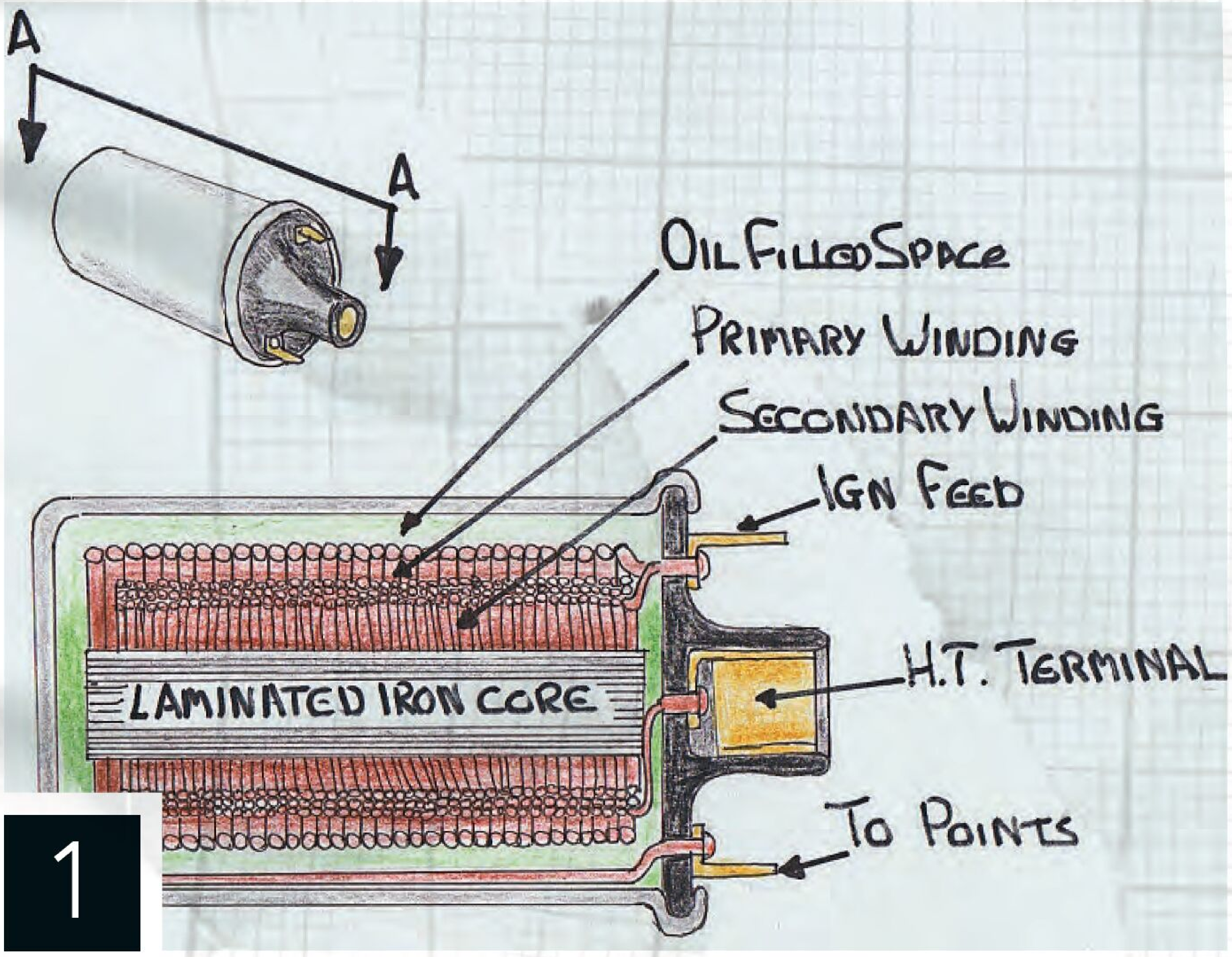
NIK

TECH

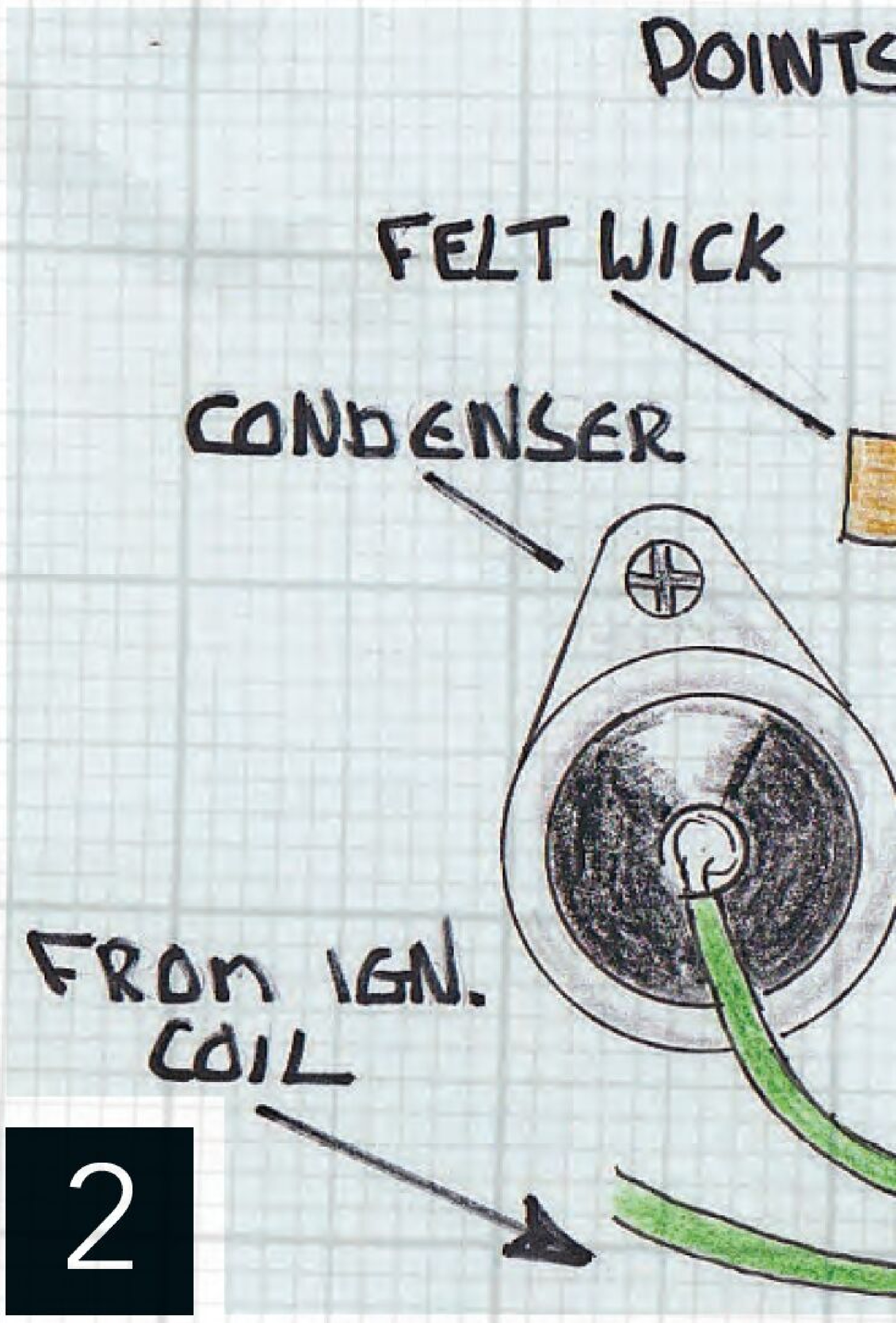
Mr Bridges' Motorcycle Diaries

VOL. VII,
EPISODE XII

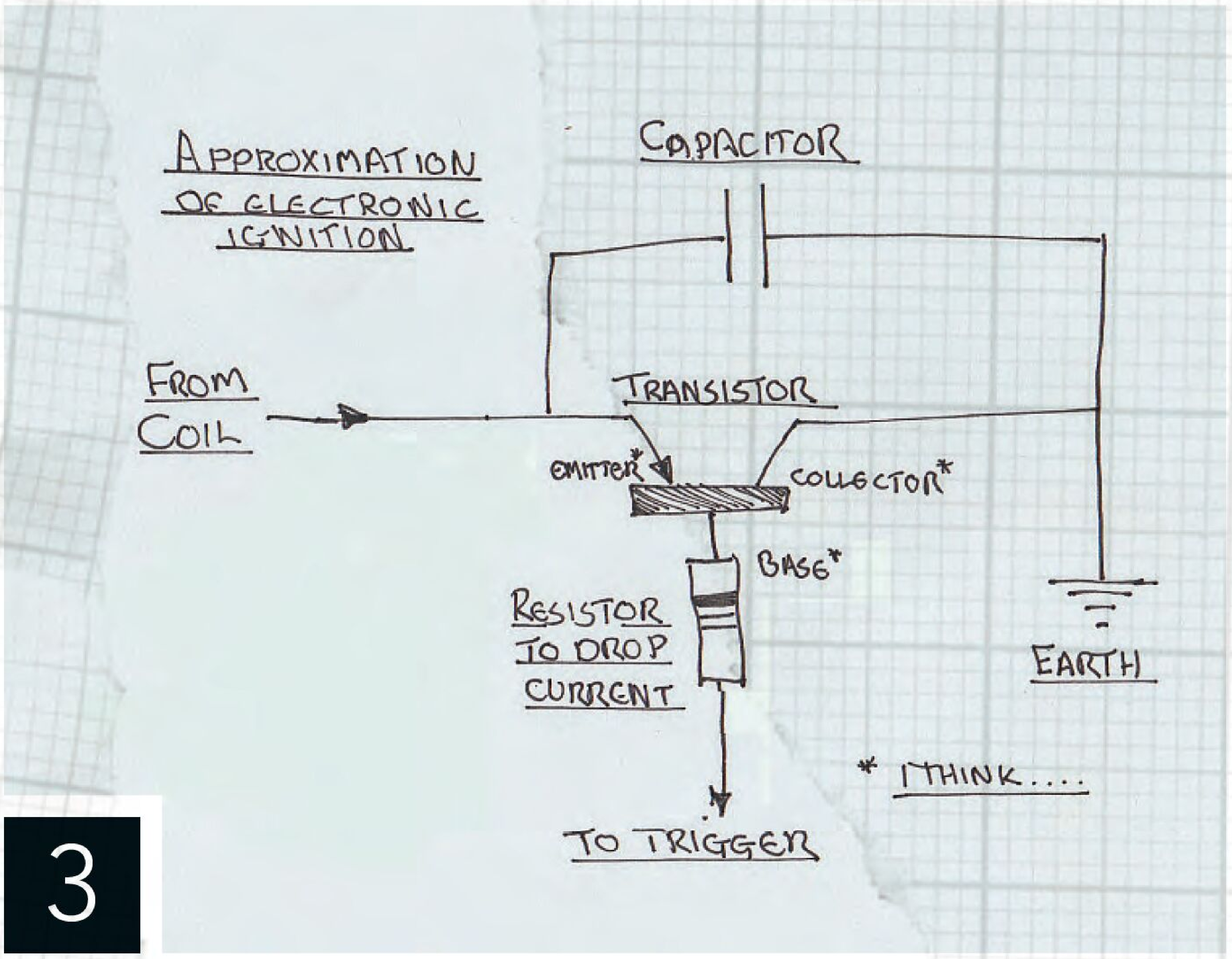
SO FAR, OUT OF THE FOUR BASIC THINGS MOTORCYCLE ELECTRICS DO (START THE MOTOR, CHARGE THE BATTERY, IGNITION, AND EVERYTHING ELSE), I'VE LOOKED AT THE STARTING AND THE CHARGING PARTS, SO THIS TIME I'LL TAKE A LOOK AT THE IGNITION.


A
A
Oil Filled Space
Primary Winding
Secondary Winding
Ign Feed
H.T. Terminal
Laminated Iron Core
To Points

1


Points
Felt Wick
Condenser
From Ign. Coil

2


Approximation of electronic ignition
Capacitor
From Coil
Transistor
Emitter*
Collector*
Base*
Resistor to drop current
Earth
* I think....
To trigger

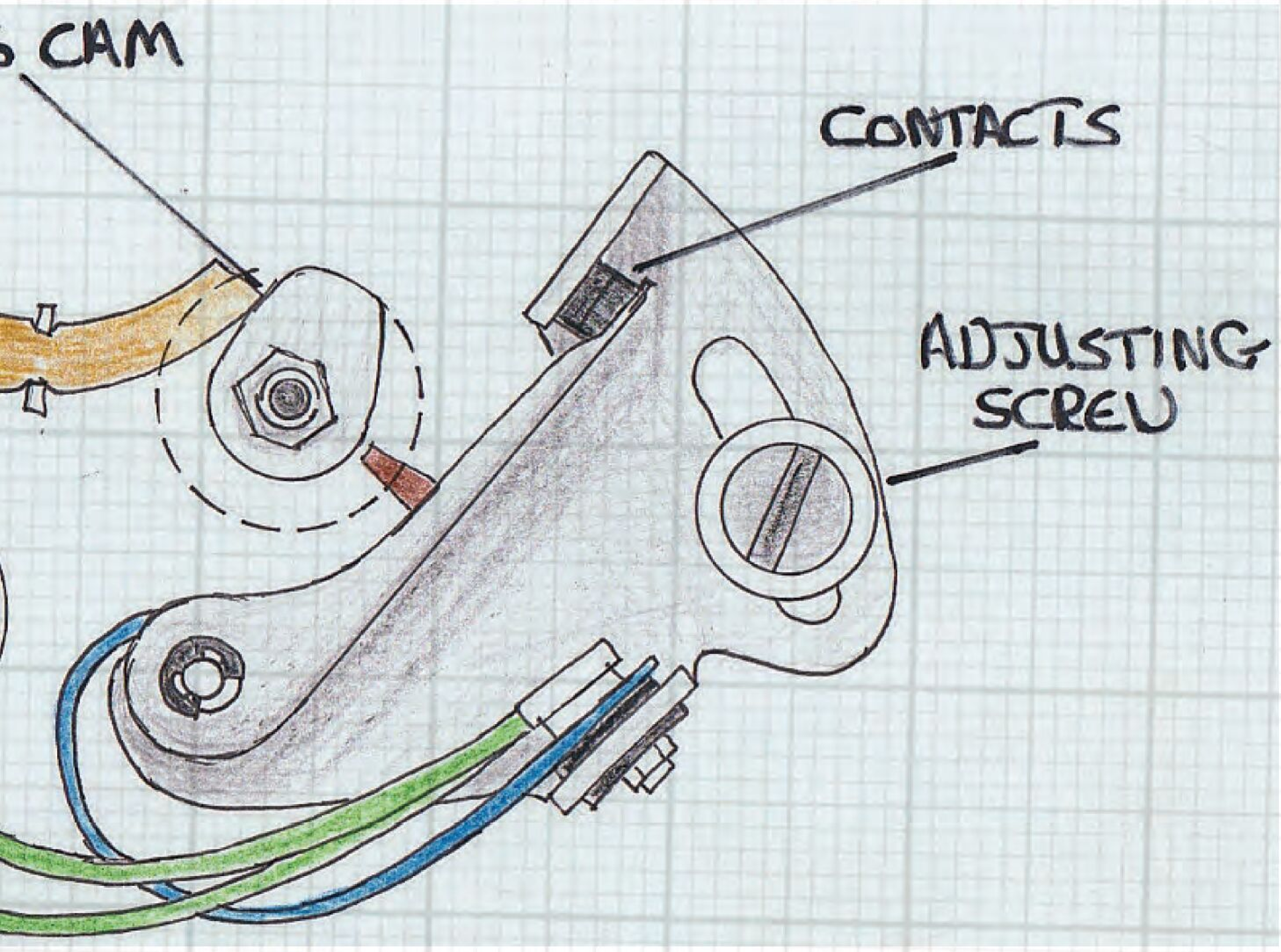
3

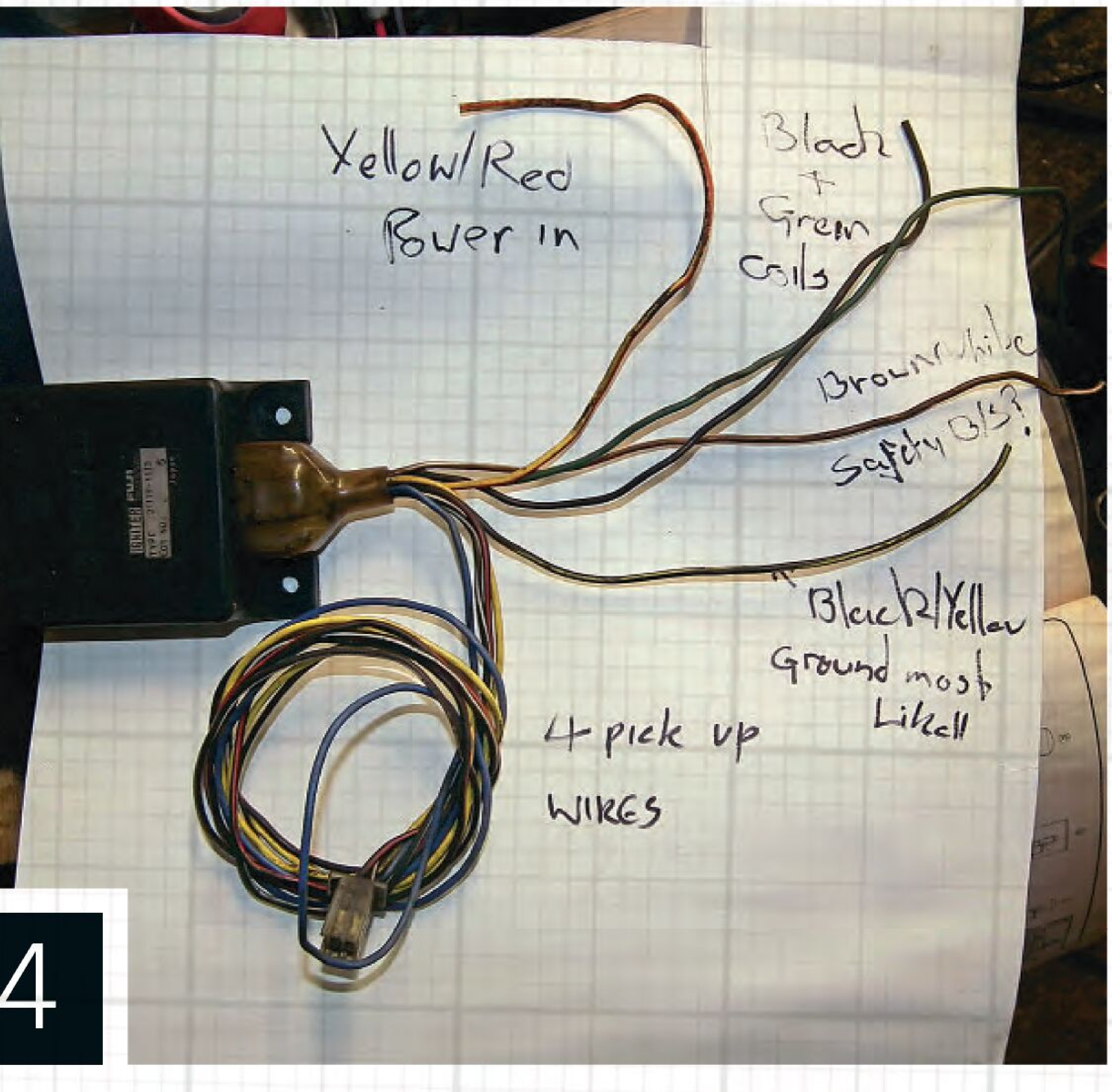
Last time I mentioned that, if you pass a current through a coil of wire, you create a magnetic field, and that if you move a coil of wire through a magnetic field, you induce a current in the coil. This's the principal that alternators, starter solenoids, and starter motors all work on, using some variation or another. It's also how ignition coils work.

An ignition coil's actually two coils of wire (Fig.1), one inside the other, so to avoid the confusion of talking about which coil in the coil is the coil we're talking about, I'm going to call them windings. You have a primary winding, and a secondary winding – when power's applied to the primary winding, current flows through it and a magnetic field forms around it. When the power's switched off, that magnetic field collapses, and a collapsing magnetic field's a moving magnetic field so it induces a current in the windings. The number of turns in the secondary winding is usually around 100 times greater than the number of turns in the primary winding, so as the magnetic field collapses it generates around 200 volts in the primary winding, but 20,000 volts in the secondary winding, which's what makes the spark.

In a points ignition system (Fig.2), the current to the primary winding's cut when the points open, and there's an immediate 200 or so volt spike there, which's why they need a capacitor to 'soak up' that spike so it doesn't arc across the points and erode the contact faces, which causes a lot of the woes the points ignitions suffer from. If you've read any Robert Heinlein, you might be familiar with the acronym TANSTAAFL? It's fairly obvious why it never caught on, I feel, but it stands for There Ain't No Such Thing As A Free Lunch, so you might be wondering how you can end up with 20,000 volts from a 12-volt battery? And watts is the answer. A watt is a unit of electrical energy, which is why your electric bill charges you for the number of kilowatt hours you used. You work out the number of watts by multiplying the voltage by the amperage - since there's typically a 5-amp fuse for the feed to the ignition, it's not going to be using more than 60 watts of electrical energy; 12 volts times 5 amps gives us 60 watts, so that 200 volt spike is going to be at around 3.3 amps, and the 20,000 volts in the secondary winding is at 0.033 amps, which is why it doesn't kill you when you get an errant spark up your arm, past your heart, and down your leg.

The basic principle is you turn the coil on, then when you want a spark, you turn it off, which is why you might hear 'points' referred to as 'contact breakers'. The snag with points, though, isn't so much that they wear and need regular adjustment - it's that they're a mechanical device that relies on a spring, and that means they can get a bit 'floaty' at high engine RPM, and the ignition timing gets a bit vague, as many an RD250 owner found out in the '70s. This's why we ended up with electronic ignition. Initially, 'transistorised' ignition (Fig.3) fed a much lower voltage to the points so they were switching something between 5 and 1.5 volts, and using the points to switch a transistor which handled switching the coil on and off, reducing points wear mostly because they were isolated from the 200-volt current spike in the ignition





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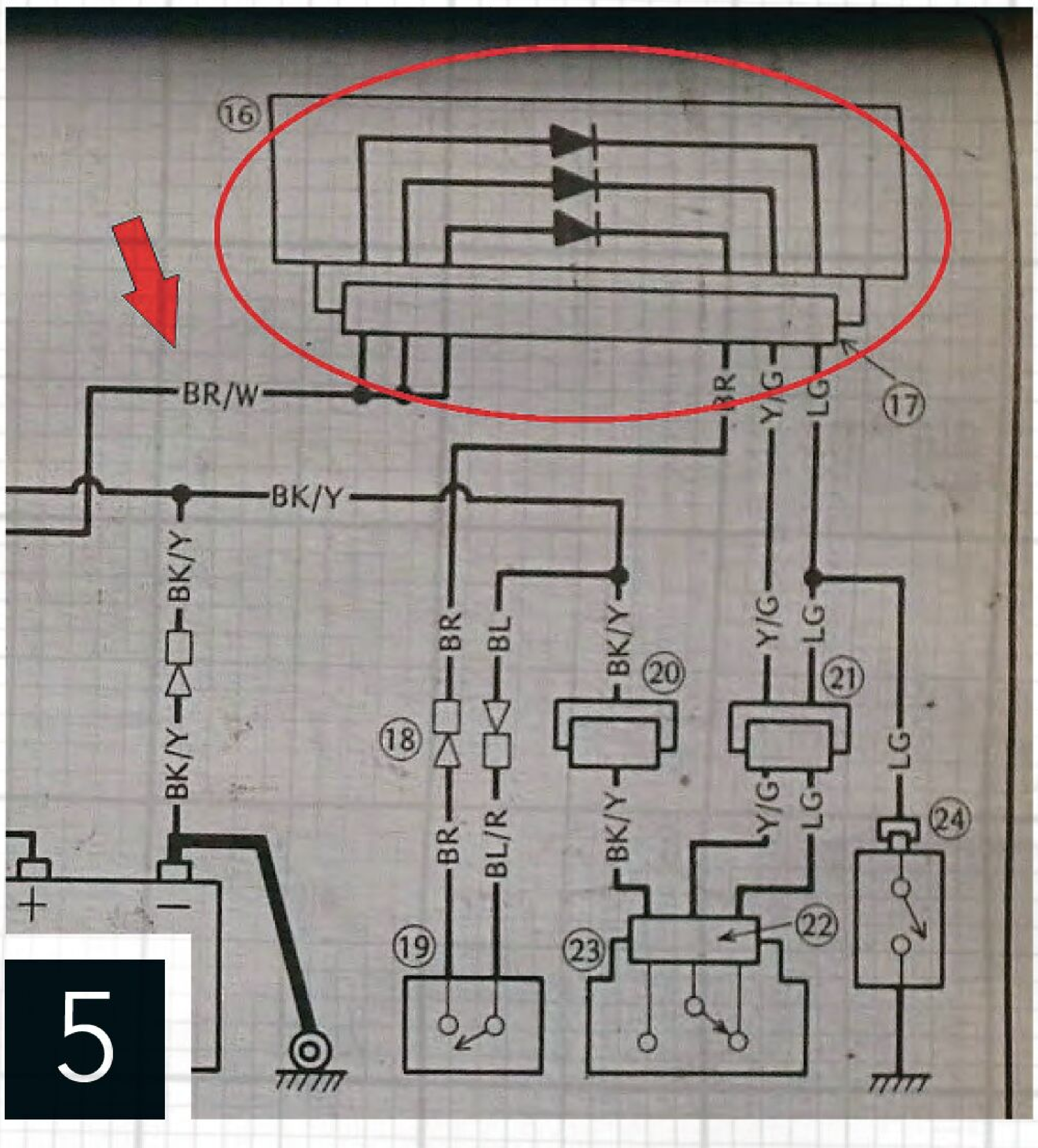

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Mr Bridges' Motorcycle Diaries

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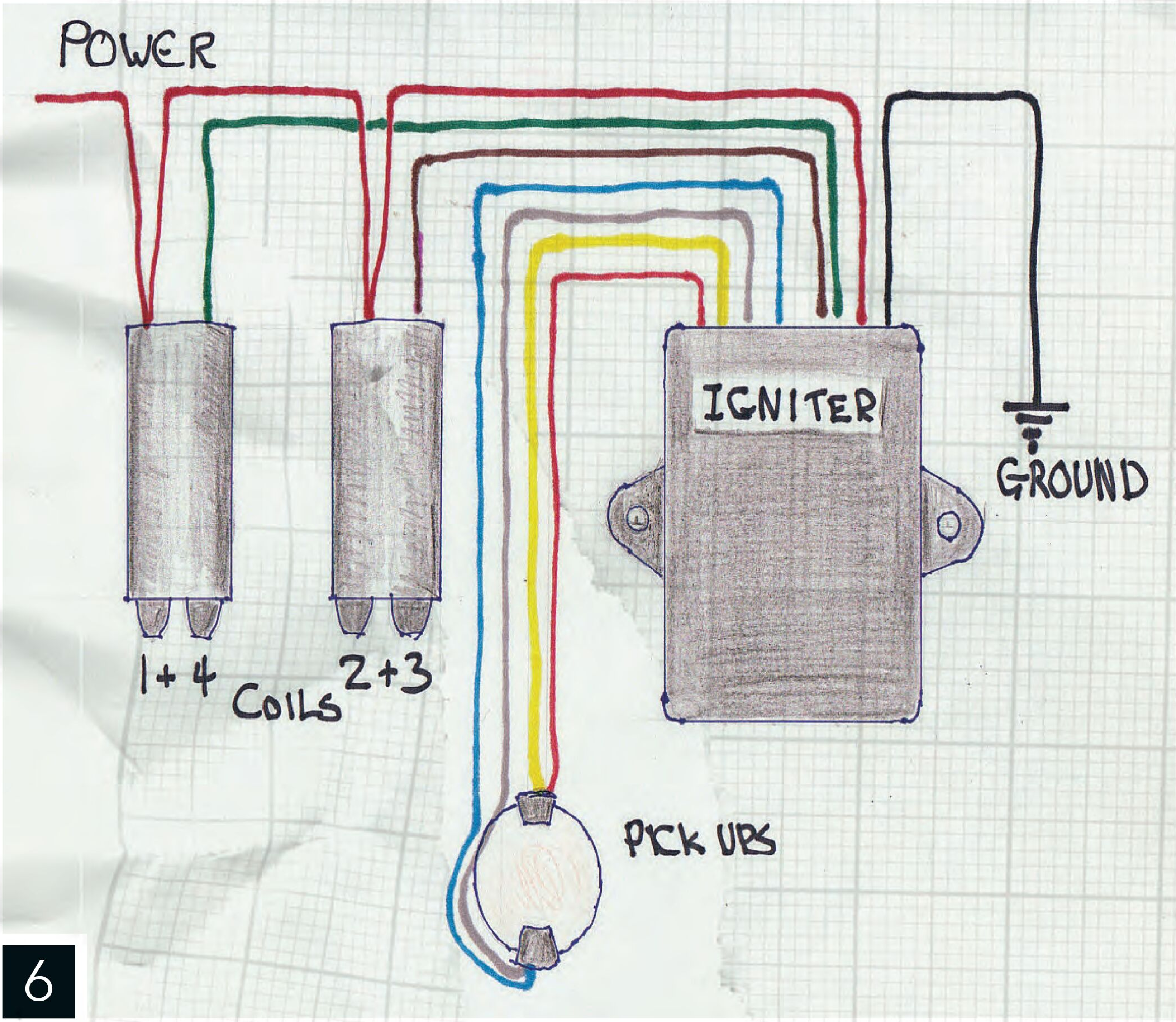


6

coils' primary winding. You can think of a starter solenoid, or a relay, as an electrically-operated switch, and a transistor's also an electronically-operated switch – in essence it's the same thing as a solenoid or a relay, as it uses a small current to switch a larger one. The difference is that it can do it a lot faster than a solenoid, relay, or, indeed, a set of points, meaning you could have high-revving engines without suffering from the bounce and rapid wear that points suffer from at high RPMs. After a certain amount of messing around using photo-sensitive diodes and one or two other variants to switch the 'black box', people in general settled on using small magnets with a coil around them, and using a metal prong, or reluctor, to give it its proper name, to interrupt the magnetic field around the magnet, inducing a small current in the coil which gets sent to the black box and used to trigger a transistor (probably) that switches off the feed to the relevant coil and creates a spark. Hopefully, it's obvious by now that wiring up a points-based ignition set up is rather easy; you need power from the ignition switch to the coil, a cable from the coil to the points, with a condenser at one end or the other. What about electronic set ups though? Well, typically, a carburettored motorcycle'll have a power feed to the black box, an earth, a 'trigger' wire for each coil, and two wires for each ignition pick-up (although that can vary). A four-cylinder motorcycle'll usually have eight wires going to the ignition 'black box' that actually work the ignition, depending on how many wires there are for the pick-ups (Fig.4). Any more wires than that are usually related to ancillary things, usually safety interlocks to prevent the motorcycle from starting in gear with the side stand down, etc.

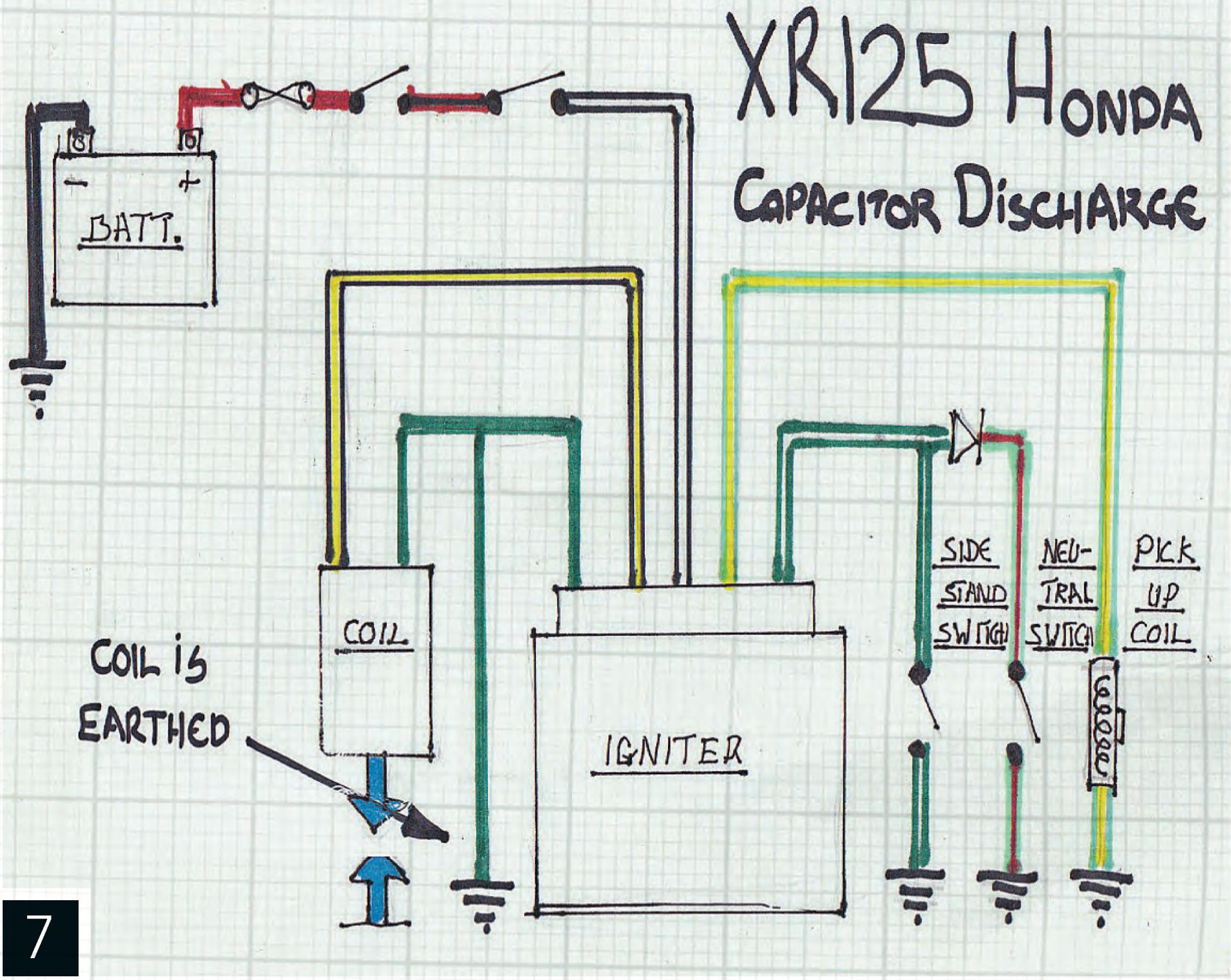
The other snag here is that, while various years of a given model may use a black box of the same shape and size, and have the same plug connector shapes, they're not necessarily wired the same and, indeed, the corresponding terminals may not even have the same function in life. As a rule, it's best to have the original plugs for the black box with the factory wires on them, but if for some reason you don't have that, try and find a 'pin out' diagram which'll tell you which pin's which – just bear in mind that some of them're done looking at the box, and some of them're done looking at the business end of the plug, which is the mirror image of the pins on the black box.

Once you establish which are the power, earth, coil, and pick-up wires for your particular box, anything left over's either left disconnected, or earthed. Some Yamaha FJs switch the starter relay from the black box, and I'm fairly sure some of them do the fuel pump – those don't need to be connected, but they'll be live so don't let them short out, and there's usually one that goes to a diode pack (Fig.5), the side-stand switch, the neutral switch, and clutch lever switch, which needs to be earthed for the box to work. As a rule of thumb, any extraneous wire from the black box that goes to a diode pack's going to need earthing, if the diodes're pointing that way.

And that's about it; you'll have power in from the switch, an earth, wires from the pick-ups which you can colour-match with the pick-ups, and a 'trigger' wire for each coil (Fig.6). Rather than joining wires on to the stub end of a cut-off connector, it's worth checking if the connector can be 'depinned', and new terminals found and reused with new wire to make sure you have a decent connection. What I've been describing is conventional ignition; there's another type which works by discharging a capacitor through the coil, unsurprisingly known as 'Capacitor Discharge Ignition' or CDI, but that acronym gets used for 'Computerised Digital Ignition' black boxes, too.

Capacitor discharge ignition's often powered direct from the alternator but, just because an ignition's powered direct from the alternator, doesn't mean it's capacitor discharge ignition, and some capacitor discharge systems're powered by 12 volts DC from the battery. In general, it's all wired in much the same way except that the coil's earthed (Fig.8), and if it's alternator-powered the ignition is 'switched off' by earthing it out, which either requires a suitable ignition switch, or a degree of cunning with a relay. Switches and relays, though, are part of 'everything else', which is what I'll look at next.

MR. BRIDGES



7

DEEP PURPLE
UNIVER
COLLEGE
LED ZEPPELIN
NEW BARBARIANS
ABSINTHE

BANNED

AN EMRIC TALE

PART ONE

IMMORTAL: NOT SUBJECT TO DEATH OR DECAY, HAVING PERPETUAL LIFE, HAVING EVERLASTING FAME, REMEMBERED THROUGHOUT TIME.

FAE: A TYPE OF MYTHICAL BEING OR LEGENDARY CREATURE FOUND IN THE FOLKLORE OF MULTIPLE EUROPEAN CULTURES, A FORM OF SPIRIT, OFTEN DESCRIBED AS METAPHYSICAL, SUPERNATURAL, OR PRETERNATURAL.

SIRENS: ENCHANTRESSES CAPABLE OF LURING HUMANS TO THEIR SIDE AND, SUBSEQUENTLY, TO THEIR DOOM.

“This is the 6 o’Clock News from the BBC.” Emric was busy in his kitchen, heating up a three-day-old chilli con carne, and the TV was on in the background. He liked to hear the sound of people’s voices – it made him feel less alone somehow.

“The Government Transport Minister, Tristan Borges-Wolfe, has today announced new measures aimed at reducing the environmental impact caused by the internal combustion engine,” the newsreader announced. Emric smiled to himself as he pulled on his oven gloves – he remembered the politicians of 2022 announcing that, by 2035, the sale of petrol and diesel-powered vehicles would end, but it was due to the total failure of the National Grid to cope with the demand from charging electric cars that that date’d long since passed. Coal was being mined again to power recommissioned power stations and the portable generators people were buying to charge their glorified golf buggies, and to no one’s real surprise, the Government and their associates enjoyed record profits.

He took a slightly burnt baked potato out of the oven as the newsreader carried on, “The public’re to be encouraged to use public transport wherever possible, and the sale of unnecessary vehicles, such as motorcycles and off-road vehicles, will be banned from August this year.”

“What?!?” His mind was racing – did he just hear that right? He picked up the remote, turned up the volume, and concentrated on the TV, forgetting all about his chilli as he sat with his eyes wide open, unable to believe what he was hearing.

“The Government will introduce a generous buy-back scheme for any motorcycles or off-road vehicles currently in use – the payment’ll be given in the form of credit to be used against a new or used electric vehicle.”

He turned off the TV and stared at the blank screen, the baked potato hardening on the plate as his appetite disappeared. He did not sleep well that night.

****

The following morning, he was stirred from his sleep by the thudding of an Ironhead motor powering down the road leading to his home. It skidded to a halt in a cloud of dust and flying stones, and the rider, Fae, jumped off and hammered at his door with a force that seemed at odds with her slight frame. “You up?” she shouted. “Hey, we’ve got work to do – drag your lazy backside out of bed!” He knew she’d never give up so, reluctantly, he pulled the sheets down, and rolled out of bed to let her in. As soon as the lock was turned, the door burst open, and he was sent crashing into the table, sending the rock-hard remains of last night’s potato flying to the floor. “Have you heard the bullshit the Government’s trying to pull now?” Fae was shrieking so loud that you could’ve heard her banshee wail in the Middle Ages.

He took a step back away from the force, and put a calming hand on her shoulder. “Yep, saw it announced last night – seems they’ve finally found a reason to legitimately do what the suits’ve been wanting to do for decades – ban bikes from the road.” He poured her a glass of her preferred temper-calming medicine, absinthe, and gingerly offered it to her. Clutching the glass with both of her shaking hands, she began to get her composure back – her eyes began to return from a flaming orange to their normal piercing blue, and eventually the fierce heat coming off her dissipated, but Emric still left the door open to let a cooling breeze in.

Even though it was early morning, the alcohol proved to be a sound choice. “I’m

BANNED AN EMRIC TALE

so angry right now," she said. "We have to do something about this, otherwise bikers'll become consigned to the history books – a curiosity from a bygone age."

He grunted in agreement, but he'd been saying this day was coming for decades. Successive governments'd been making biking more difficult. In the 1960s riders were restricted to 250cc learner bikes, then it was compulsory helmets in the 1970s followed, in the 1980s, by a drop to 125cc for learners, and an attempted horsepower limit. Tests to get a licence became ever more difficult, culminating in the current multi-tier, power-restricted farce that has to be navigated before you could get unrestricted access to the joy that is motorcycling in all of its many forms. "It's time to fight back," he said. "We need to find a way to undermine all this BULLSHIT!"

He stood and walked to the window. Out in the yard, glinting in the sun, was the Ironhead Sportster she'd ridden for years, and tucked away in the corner stood his WLA Harley, while his Bonnie bobber was under an old bed sheet that he used as a dust cover. He was unaware his hands'd curled into fists. "There's no way I'm going to let them get away with this."

Fae walked over and wrapped her arms around his, placing her head on his back. "That's what I wanted to hear," she said. "Let's do this!"

****

Emric pulled a cardboard box out from under his bed, carried it into the kitchen, and upended it on the table. Decades of old anti-bike newspaper cuttings, magazine articles, and handwritten notes spilled out. "I knew this'd all come in useful some day – search for anything that mentions tan Borges-Wolfe." The MP was one of those slippery career politicians who rose to the top with copious assistance from bribes, favours, and dubious deals that inevitably meant innocent bystanders got thoroughly shafted while he, of course, always got away scot-free, usually with a bag full of cash, too.

"What are we looking for?" asked Fae.

"These slimebags think they're untouchable," replied Emric. "Look for anything that mentions him, no matter how obscure."

****

Many hours, and the remainder of the absinth, later, a collection of articles lay set to one side, each containing references to Borges-Wolfe and the many deals he was involved in. "We're going to need some help with this," Emric grumbled.

Fae upturned her empty glass in a mock attempt to drain the last drops. "I think I may know someone who can help us," she replied with a sly grin. "I'll need to ride into London to see Ereya – fancy joining me?" He took the hint, and fetched another bottle. He recalled meeting Ereya before – a Siren that politicians and men of power found irresistible. Her own tastes, however, leant toward the anarchistic biker type – she loved a rebel, and'd jump at the chance to bring one of the big suits down. "Deffo," he said. "Be good to see her again; probably been 50 years or more since I last saw her."

The pair agreed to ride down the next day. Fae said she'd stay the night with Emric to ensure an early start, a situation that bought a wry grin to his face, as he knew she, too, had a soft spot for a biker.

****

They woke early, not having slept much, and Fae padded out of bed. He watched her naked body move, appreciating the way the sunlight streamed through the window making her skin glow like the otherworldly being he knew she was.

"Up you get, big man," she said. "You can make me breakfast at the very least."

He forced himself out of the warm bed as she pulled on a pair of jeans and a faded Motorhead tee-shirt and walked outside. He watched her through the kitchen window as he prepared sausages and eggs. She was expertly checking over her Sportster for the ride, smoothly going over a pre-ride routine she'd been doing for decades. Although the bike was pushing 65 years old now, it still functioned as if it were newly built, such was her intimacy with her Harley. It was as if she and the bike were communicating with each other.

"Breakfast's ready," he called out of the window, and could've sworn the Sporty shifted slightly on its side-stand, almost as if he'd made it jump.

"Coming!" she replied, and as she walked away from her bike, trailing her hand over the bodywork in an almost sensual caress, Emric felt a pang of jealousy.

****

Ereya had a converted warehouse that she'd bought for a song in the early '60s when all of the Docklands area of East London was a no-go area; when old wharfs and warehouses were being demolished or sold off in an attempt to make the area more appealing to the monied classes. Hers was behind Billingsgate Fish Market, and wasn't much to look at from the outside, but inside it was something else. After an uneventful and frustratingly slow ride down the unmarked cop car infested A12, they pulled up outside.

"Bit rough and smelly round here," sniffed Emric as he kicked his stand down and rested his Bobber on it.

"Don't judge yet," smirked Fae, "looks're deceiving."

He noted that there were a few bikes outside – all classy rides, no plastic-covered crotch-rockets. Fae pressed the buzzer, and a familiar voice answered. "Who's there?" followed by silence.

"Fae." That was all that was needed for the door to click and be pushed open. The ground floor was vast, dimly lit, and scattered with sofas and comfortable-looking leather chairs, and there were a couple of small raised platforms with dancing poles on. A long, well-stocked bar ran along one wall. It had the air of a well-heeled gentleman's club, right up until you noticed there were a couple more bikes lurking in the shadows.

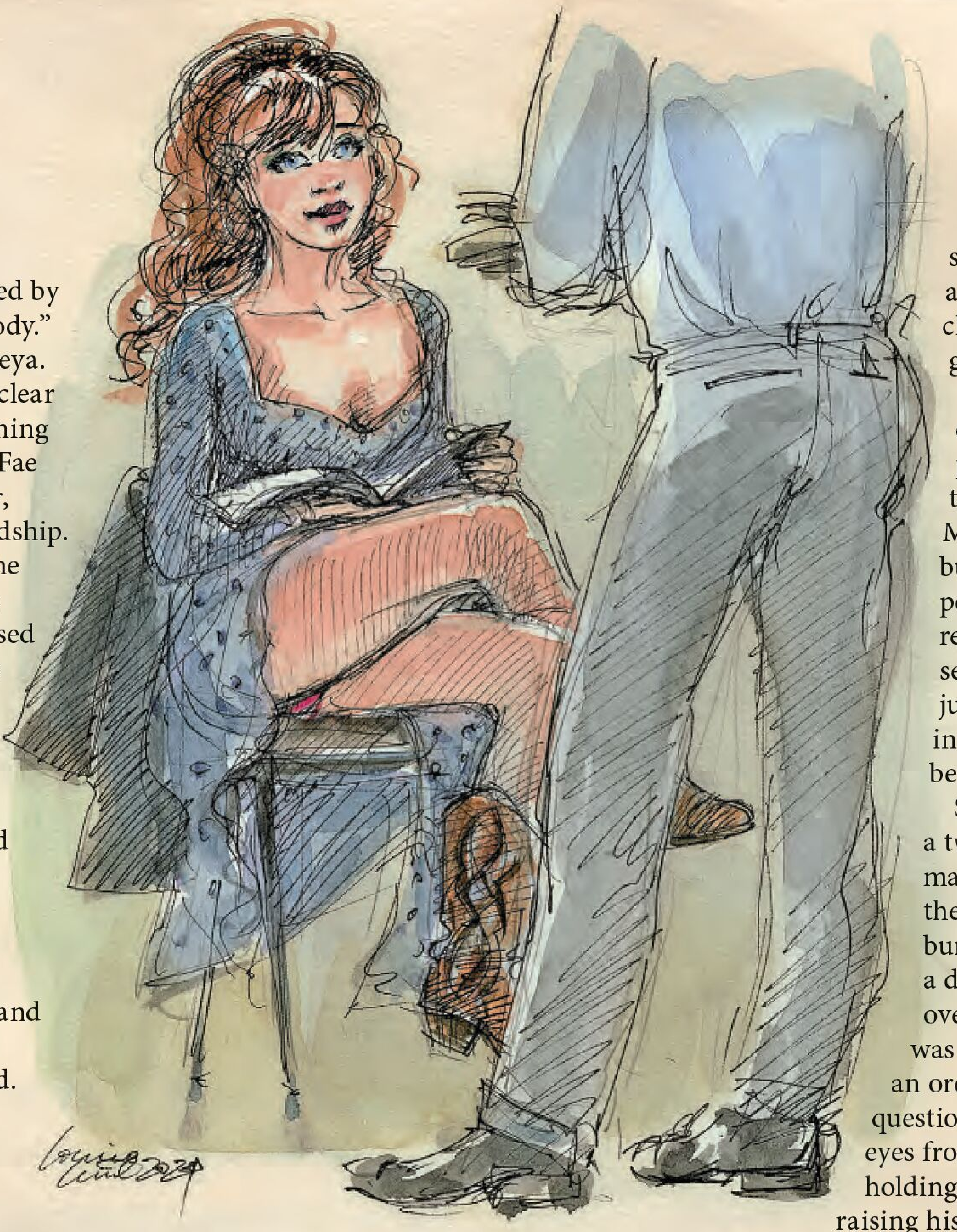
"Wow!" whispered Emric as he stood wide-eyed as he gazed around. The walls were dotted with posters of past concerts; Led Zeppelin at Knebworth, Deep Purple at University College, Black Sabbath at Hyde Park, and he wandered deeper into the building, noticing that all the posters were signed with personal messages. "You rock Ereya, love Ozzy," said one scribble. "Come back any time, Rob" was scrawled across another. It was clear Ereya'd made a memorable impression on all of these rock gods.

The sound of a lift whirring into life made him spin round. Behind the bar, he could see a sliding gate, cables moving behind it, and raucous laughter echoed down from somewhere above. As the lift dropped into view Ereya revealed herself. In true Siren style. She was stunning. Sky-high heels, figure-hugging denim micro-skirt that revealed tattooed legs that seemed to go on forever. Up top, a black satin buttoned shirt that left none of her curves to the imagination, and a cascade of flame-red hair that tumbled down on to the shirt, framing a striking face and piercing green eyes. Her head was thrown back in laughter. He felt an involuntary twinge in his jeans, and looked guiltily at Fae, who was watching him intently.

The lift clunked to a halt. It was filled by a group of backpatch-wearing MC members – they all looked exhausted as they wandered over to the bikes they'd seen in the shadows earlier. "See you soon, boys," Ereya shouted over to them. "Bring some friends next time!"

Fae wandered over and was immediately engulfed by her, her fiery mane completely hiding her from view. Then she raised her head to look over Fae's shoulder, saw Emric, and a smile crept over her face. Her eyes seemed to grow bigger, and he felt himself drawn toward her. He knew she was drawing him in, but he was powerless, and he remembered the sensation from the last time they met – he was at her mercy.

"Stop it!" Fae'd pushed herself away. "Leave him be you insatiable tart." The pair looked at each other intently and then



burst into laughter.

"Men," laughed Fae, "ruled by the smallest part of their body."

"So easily led," agreed Ereya.

Emric shook his head to clear the thoughts that were running through them – Ereya and Fae wrapped around each other, rekindling an age-old friendship.

"That's why we're here," he grumbled menacingly. "We need your… umm, specialised skills to help us prevent the unimaginable happening."

Ereya pulled out of the embrace, but held on to Fae's hand. "Is it the bike ban?" she asked. He nodded slowly. "The boys were talking about it last night during a rest break." Fae raised her eyebrows at that comment–- Emric saw her and smiled to himself.

"What can I do?" she said. "I'm no politician."

"No, but Tristan Borges-Wolfe is a man – a man with a massive ego," Fae explained, "and you're expert at getting men to do your bidding. Reckon you can convince this self-serving prick to come here?"

Ereya stood with her hands on her hips, looking for all the world like some movie superhero. She was deep in thought. "With your help," she said, "I think we might just be able to pull this off – let's hit the bar and make a plan."

****

At the bar, Ereya acted as host. "I do love a challenge," she stated, "but these politicians're so slimy we'll need something significant to use as leverage against him. What do we already know?"

Emric explained about Borges-Wolfe's monied background, his taste for pretty young things, his massive ego, and anything else he could remember. Fae laid out the collection of newspaper and magazine cuttings, including his well-documented hatred of motorcycles and bikers.

"We need to find out why he hates bikers so much. We might be able to use that against him," stated Emric.

Fae interrupted. "We also need to find someone who has accurate data – we all know bikes're nothing like as polluting, and cause way less congestion, than cars."

Emric continued. "This info'll be well hidden because it doesn't fit in with his anti-biker stance, so we need to find it."

The drinking continued well into the night as a plan slowly fell into place. Eventually Ereya exclaimed: "That should work – it looks like us girls are going to be busy!" as the plan called for skills that Emric was not in possession of, not that he was going to be idle.

****

Borges-Wolfe was due to make a visit to Dagenham, one of London's most deprived areas, to be seen to make promises to the locals. He wanted to say that he was the man to bring prosperity to their neck of the woods, be photographed shaking hands with the great unwashed, and generally be a professional politician. Fae was also planning to be there – she, too, wanted to get him to press the flesh, but not in a way he'd be expecting. Emric was busy visiting all the local biker haunts, drumming up support for the plan to get the politician to change his mind about bikers.

Before the visit, they still needed to find out where the hatred of bikers came from – this was a job for an enchantress. Borges-Wolfe had regular surgeries in his upmarket constituency of Eltham so this was Fae's destination this morning. She was dressed to captivate. Her research'd shown that there were a lot of pictures of him getting friendly with females displaying plenty of cleavage, and she was wearing a long, flowing dress that was transparent when the sun was behind it, showing every inch of her enticing curves. This was a display that'd be impossible for any red-blooded male to ignore. Her hair was tousled up in a loose ponytail, and the dress was set off by a slit up to her thigh, showing off her shapely legs and cowboy boots – not a classy look, but one certain to get attention.

She arrived at the surgery, only to be told by a very prim receptionist: "You need to make an appointment, Mr Borges-Wolfe is a very busy man." Fae slumped and pouted – this seemed to get a reaction. "You can wait and see if there's a cancellation, just sit over there." She settled in for what she thought might be a long day.

She'd just started to read a two-year-old copy of Hello magazine that'd been left on the surgery table when a door burst open. "Can you get me a double espresso latte from over the road, Patricia!" It was Borges-Wolfe, barking out an order rather than asking a question. He'd not even raised his eyes from the wad of papers he was holding. "Now please," he rumbled, raising his eyes toward his secretary. She got up hurriedly, straightening her dress as she removed herself from behind her desk. Borges-Wolfe's eyes followed her as she made her way out to the front door, but his eyes slipped from Patricia as she passed Fae. His gaze stuck on her – where she'd crossed her legs, the skirt'd slipped open giving an uninterrupted view of their entire length. "Well, hello there," he said in a sleazy tone. "Are you here to see me? I do hope so!"

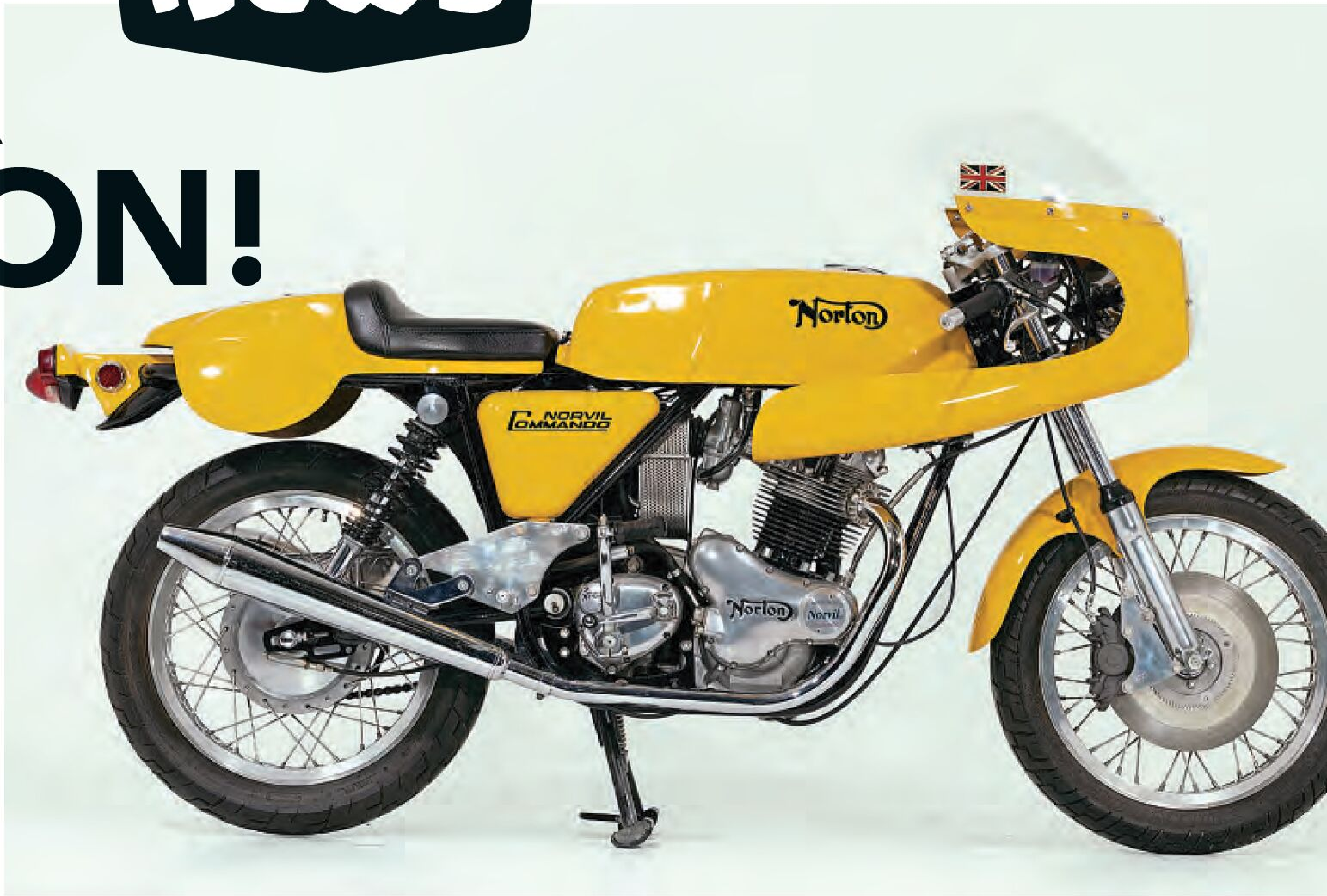
She had to fight back her true emotions. "I need to speak to someone important – someone who can make things happen," she purred, leaning forward and making sure her boobs were clearly visible, threatening to escape from her top.

"Come into my office." He held the door open. "I feel sure I can find a way to help you." He undressed her with his eyes as she walked toward him, and repulsion engulfed her, but she pushed the feeling down as she tried to resist the urge to punch his smug face. She forced a smile and skipped toward him, making sure everything was swaying as she brushed past him. He put his hand in the middle of her back and, as they got into his office, it started to slide its way downward. Fae stepped forward, and she heard the door lock turn behind her.

To be continued…

TREVOR DOWLING
ILLUSTRATIONS BY
LOUISE LIMB

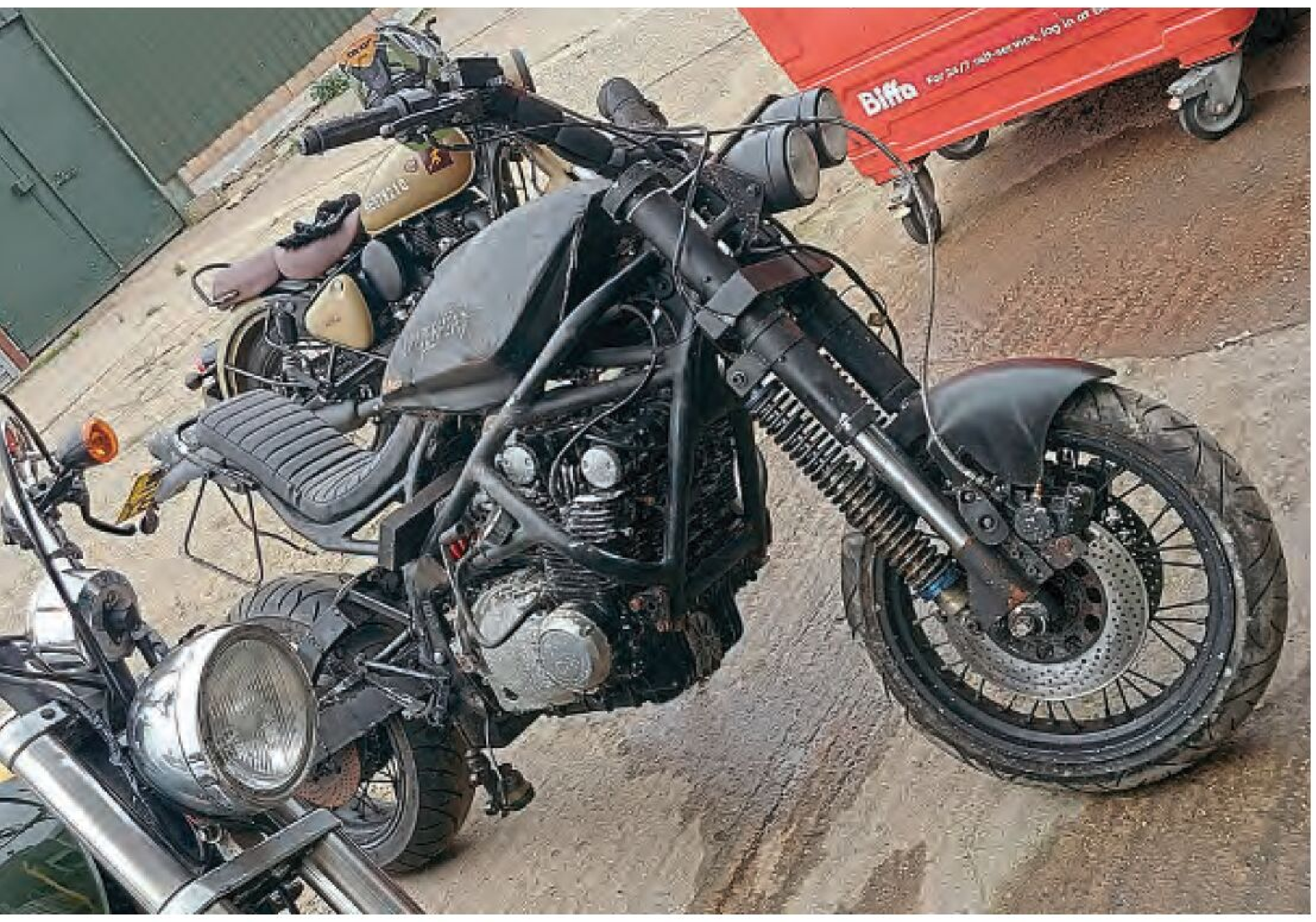
WIN A NORTON!



The National Motorcycle Museum's announced its latest raffle, and the first prize this time's a genuine, and very desirable, 1972 Norton Commando Norvil 750cc production racer. Tickets cost just £2 each, and you can get them from the National Motorcycle Museum at **www.thenmm.co.uk**

Second prize is a £1,500 voucher to spend with Sealey Tools, and third is a Sealey Tools "Patriot" roll-cab tool cabinet (worth £719.95) in your choice of five flag designs (Union Jack, George Cross, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland).

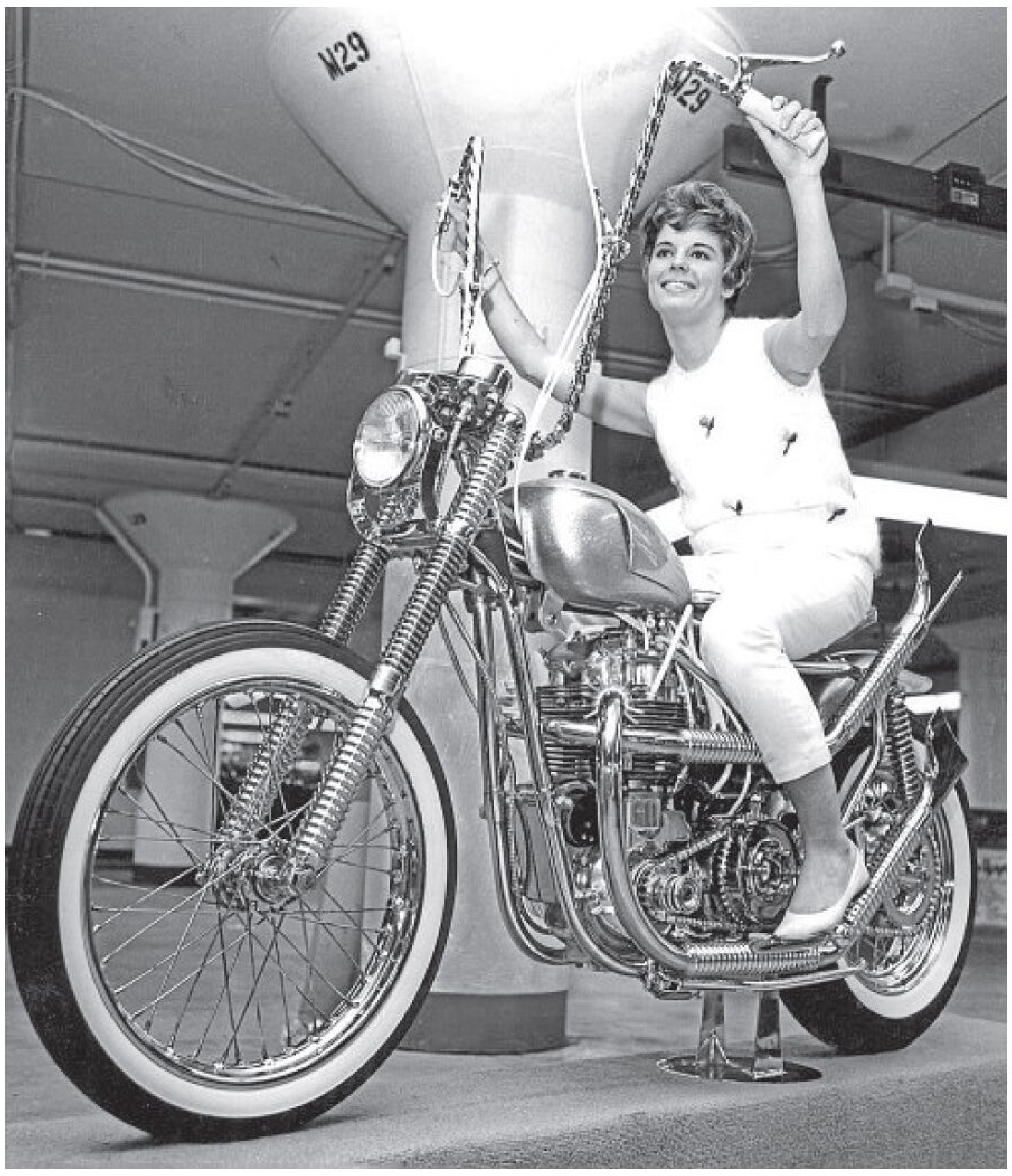
Good luck!



RESURRECTION!

Those of you who used to read AWoL will remember that, in a very early issue, they ran a feature on a particularly in-yer-face rat/survival bike called 'Eraserhead', with its one-off Harris-style wrapround and forks with external shocks, that, not long after the feature, seemed to completely disappear off the face of the custom world.

Well, back in November I called in to see String at Raw Steel Choppers and parked outside his unit was, you guessed it, Eraserhead. It's been off the road for a very long time, and is to be reframed, and the old air-cooled GS motor replaced with a Bandit Twelve item, before it's shipped off to Sweden where the owner's moving to. We'll try and get a feature on it before it goes, but it's nice to see another boundary-pushing build still exists, as too many of them've disappeared, haven't they?



HISTORICAL CHOPPER

Our Jon in the office spotted this in an old issue of The Motor Cycle (November 5, 1964). "Not much like the original model (the bike, that is), this was built by Buzzy Payne of Washington, and is valued at $3500 (about £1250). Showing the bike off to its best advantage at the Chicago International Hot Rod & Custom Car Show is Sue Peterson of Grenview, Illinois."

That bike wouldn't look out of place at a show these days, would it?

ACE CAFE TOY RUN

On Sunday, 15 December, the Ace Cafe's annual Christmas Toy Run'll be leaving at 10.30am to visit and drop off presents to the children's wards at two London hospitals.

As well as being grateful for anything that you'd like to donate for ages 3-11, the toys always asked for are: LEGO sets, arts and crafts sets, Barbies, Spider-Man toys, and cars and planes (unwrapped please) – not stuffed toys and sweets, because of allergies. (The nursing staff, mind you, may appreciate some sweet treats!)

On returning to the cafe, there'll be prizes for the Best Dressed Bike and Best Dressed Rider.

Get more info' from **www.london.acecafe.com**

ACE CAFE LONDON
ACE CAFE LONDON

ANDRÁS DROPPA

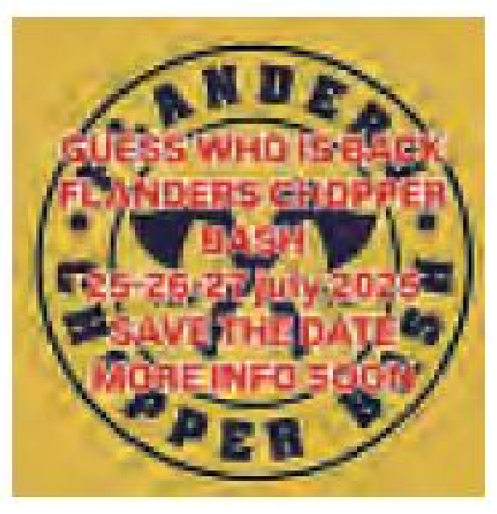
András Droppa, a 22-year-old Hard Rock/Blues guitarist, singer, and songwriter raised in Bideford, Devon, played at NCC London's Diamond Day at the Ace Cafe last year. His unique blend of Hard Rock, Blues, and Soul shines through in his original material, and his influences include AC/DC, Led Zeppelin, Cream, Eric Clapton, Black Stone Cherry, Rival Sons, The Darkness, and Jared James Nichols, amongst others.

He's currently on his debut UK/Ireland tour (the 'Painted Ladies' tour), finishing in May in Fibber Magees, Dublin, and you can find out where and when you can see him at **www.andras-droppa-music.com**

FLANDERS CHOPPER BASH

The big news for 2025 is the return of the much-missed Flanders Chopper Bash, in Flanders (the Dutch-speaking northern portion of Belgium). It's an old-school chopper event, and it's going to be on over the weekend of 25-27 July.

Watch this space, or social media, for more information as it's released.

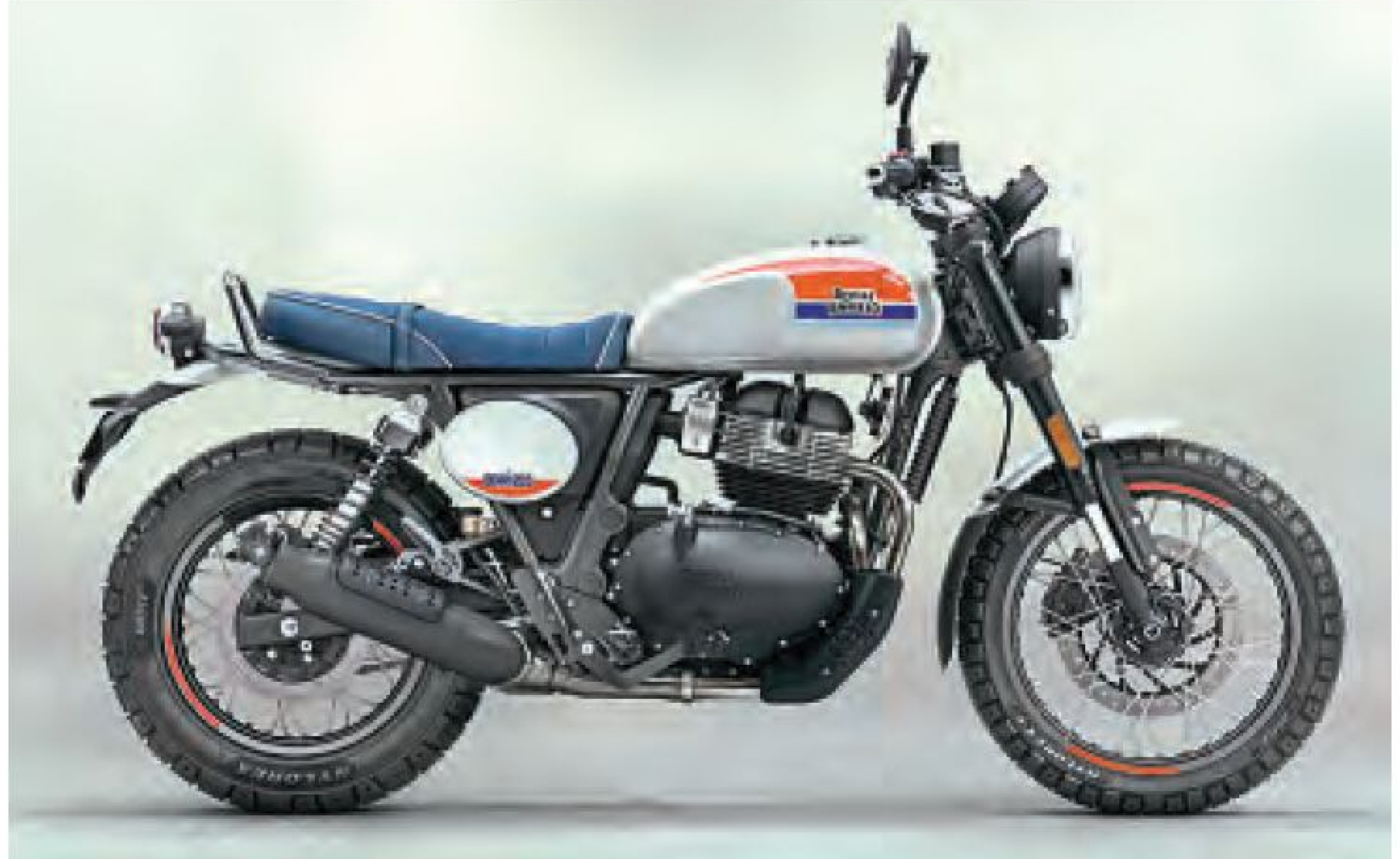


MAG VICTORY

Bath & North East Somerset (B&NES) Council has withdrawn plans to introduce emission-based charges for motorcycle parking, following a strong, MAG-lead campaign. One key element of the argument against the charges was the lack of data held by the DVSA on motorcycle CO2 emissions – a Freedom of Information request showed that emissions data's held for less than 10 per cent of registered motorcycles, as the original plan, in the absence of DVSA records, would've seen a system for motorcycles relating to engine capacity with a 50cc moped charged the same as a 1550cc car, and a 600cc motorcycle charged the same as a car over 2950cc.

MAG's Director of Campaigns & Political Engagement, Colin Brown, said: "We are delighted that motorcycle parking will remain free of charge in Bath and surrounding towns, but we need to be mindful that the statement from the Council suggests we have won on a technicality, rather than winning in principle. We must remain vigilant for a renewed attempt to introduce charges for motorcycles further down the line."

ROYAL ENFIELD BEAR 650



For 2025, Royal Enfield have launched the Bear 650 – a stylish new scrambler with a '60s soul, based on the Interceptor 650 and inspired by Eddie Mulder's historic win at the 1960 Big Bear Run.

It has a 19-inch/17-inch front/rear wheel-combo with chunky dual-purpose tyres; a scrambler-style seat; kicked-up rear loop; 184mm (seven inches) of ground-clearance; a 2-1 exhaust; competition number boards; Showa USD big piston forks and Showa Twin tube RSU shocks; wide handlebars and neutrally positioned footpegs; 320mm front/270mm rear discs; and switchable rear ABS.

There're three distinct colours: Petrol Green, Golden Shadow, and a special edition called Two Four Nine, and prices start at £6,749. Get more info' and/or a test-ride at your local Royal Enfield dealer or **www.royalenfield.com**

Stuff

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HJC I20 FURIA MODULAR HELMET

The all-new HJC I20 is designed to give riders a different approach to the classic open-face/half helmet. This streetfighter-inspired helmet comes with a removable mask and a wide-vision, anti-fog coated sun visor (smoked) that manually operates with pull tabs located on each side of the helmet. The shell's lightweight and offers a superior fit, using a 3-shell breakdown from sizes XS up to 2XL, and's ready to accept the SMART HJC Bluetooth systems.

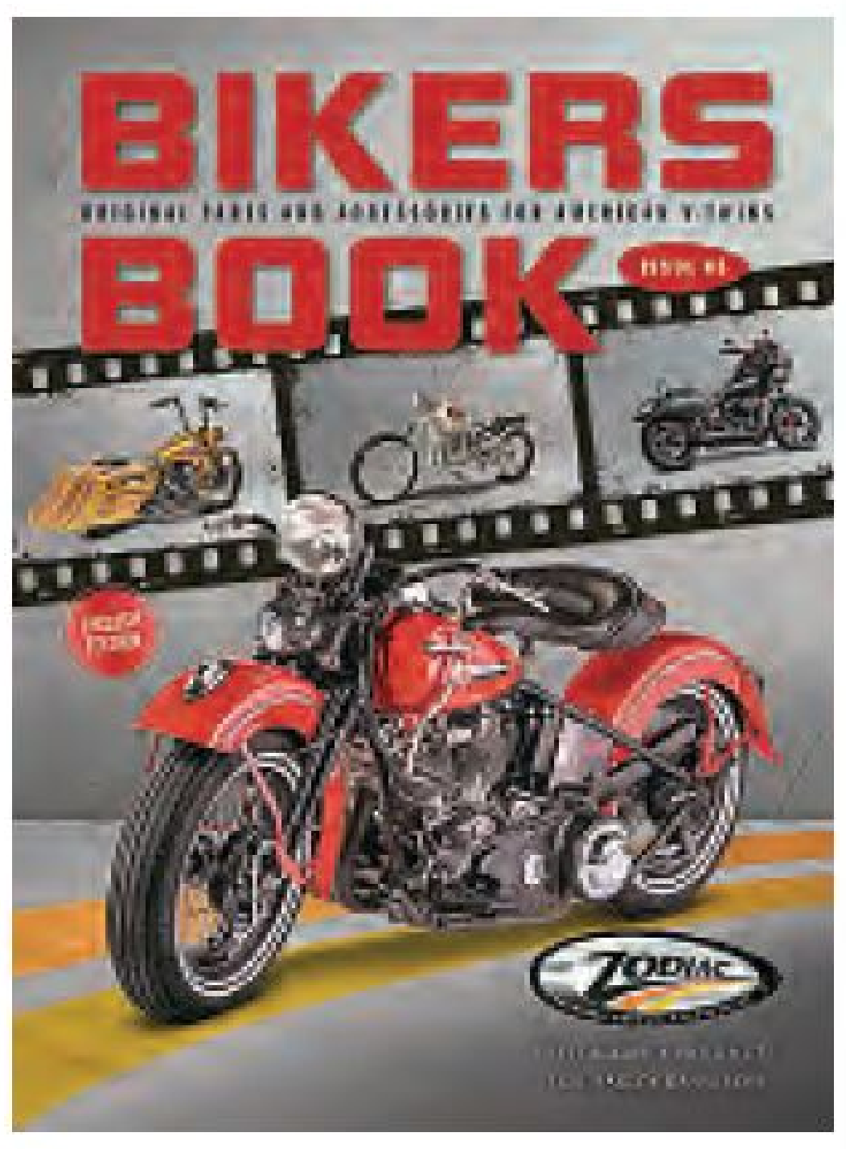
Available in an eye-catching yellow or a more subtle grey, the Furia costs £199.99 from anywhere that stocks the HJC range or **www.oxfordproducts.com**

CUSTOM CRUISERS SIDE-BAGS

Custom Cruisers're offering these new fibreglass, UK made, side-bags originally designed for H-D FXRs, but which can be adapted for any twin-shock bike. They can be made to your spec' so prices vary. Contact Custom Cruisers on **01773 835666** or through **www.customcruisers.com**

ZODIAC BIKERS BOOK

The Zodiac Bikers Book is the best aftermarket catalogue ever made, and this 2025-2026 edition contains more than 40,000 parts and accessories, and is one of the most extensive available for the Harley-Davidson and American V-Twin markets, and for parts for other brands, too, as well as clothing, and custom accessories.



Get yours from anywhere that stocks the Zodiac range or from **www.zodiac.nl**

JOHN DOE DEFENDER CARGOS

These Defender motorcycle cargo trews're part of their ultra-light monolayer collection, and're certified to AAA standard, the highest possible CE protection. Their specially developed XTM fibre turns a pair of classic cargos pants into a pair of robust, abrasion-resistant and crash-proof motorcycle trousers that remain extremely light thanks to a single layer of fabric. The knee and hip protectors're not only removable, but you can also adjust them vertically and horizontally, guaranteeing maximum protection and comfort.

Available in black and olive colours, they come in all the usual sizes, and you can get them from anywhere that stocks the Parts Europe range or direct from **www.partseurope.eu**

RECOMMENDED
BACK STREET HEROES

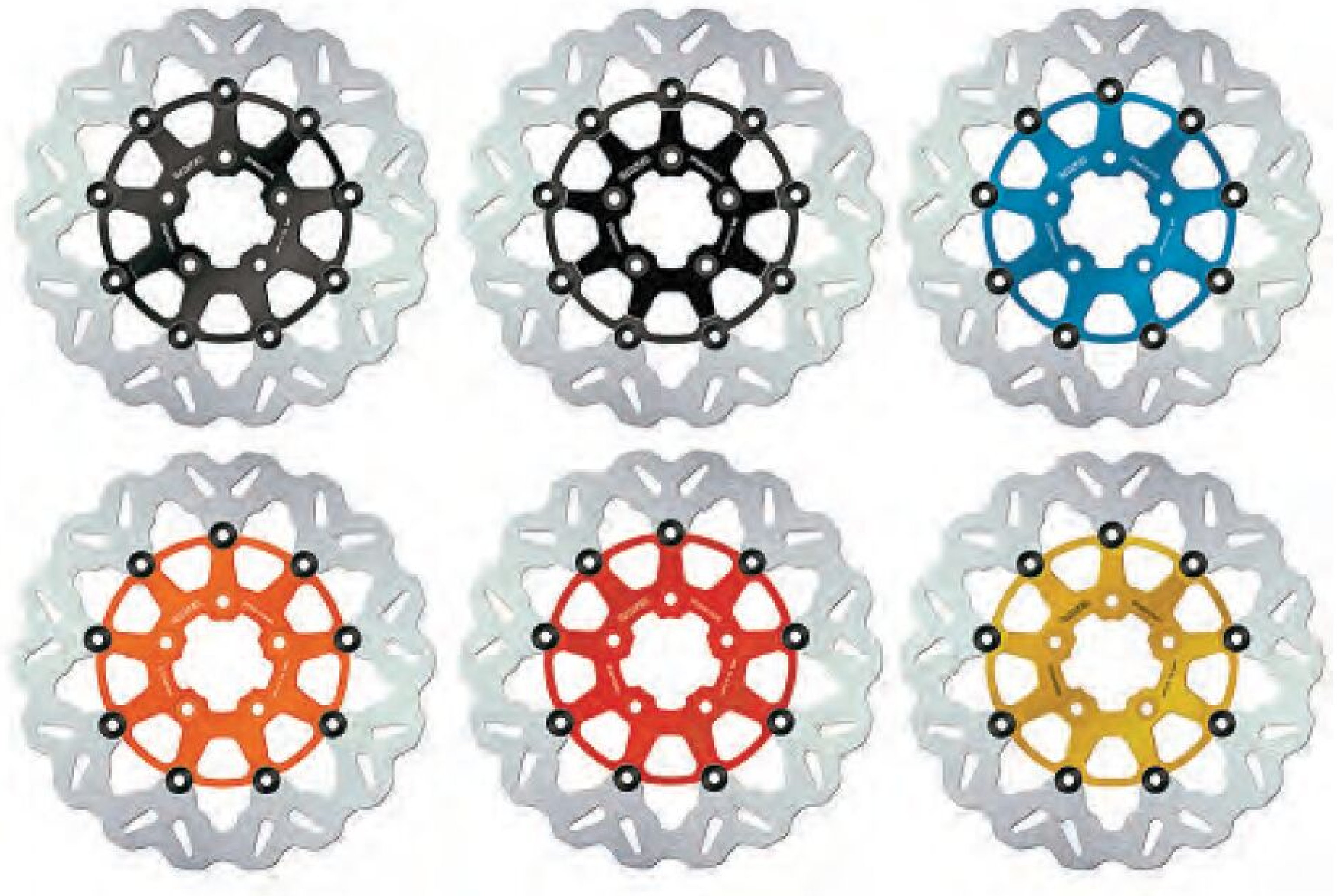
WEISE OUTLAST SIRIUS 2.0 GLOVES

As the weather gets colder and colder, this latest version of Weise's renowned Outlast gloves're just the ticket for keeping one's pinkies perky.

They're made from a mix of full grain leather and soft-shell textile; have a mcTex waterproof/breathable membrane; an Outlast temperature-regulating thermal lining; 3M Thinsulate thermal linings on the back of the hand and on the palm; padded palms and knuckles; stretch panels for added flexibility; a visor wipe; and adjustable wrists and cuffs, and're touchscreen-compatible so you don't have to take 'em off to use your 'phone or sat-nav.

Available in all the usual sizes, they really are toasty, and well worth the £129.99 they cost from anywhere that stocks the Weise Clothing range or **www.weiseclothing.com**

GALFER WAVE FLOATING DISCS



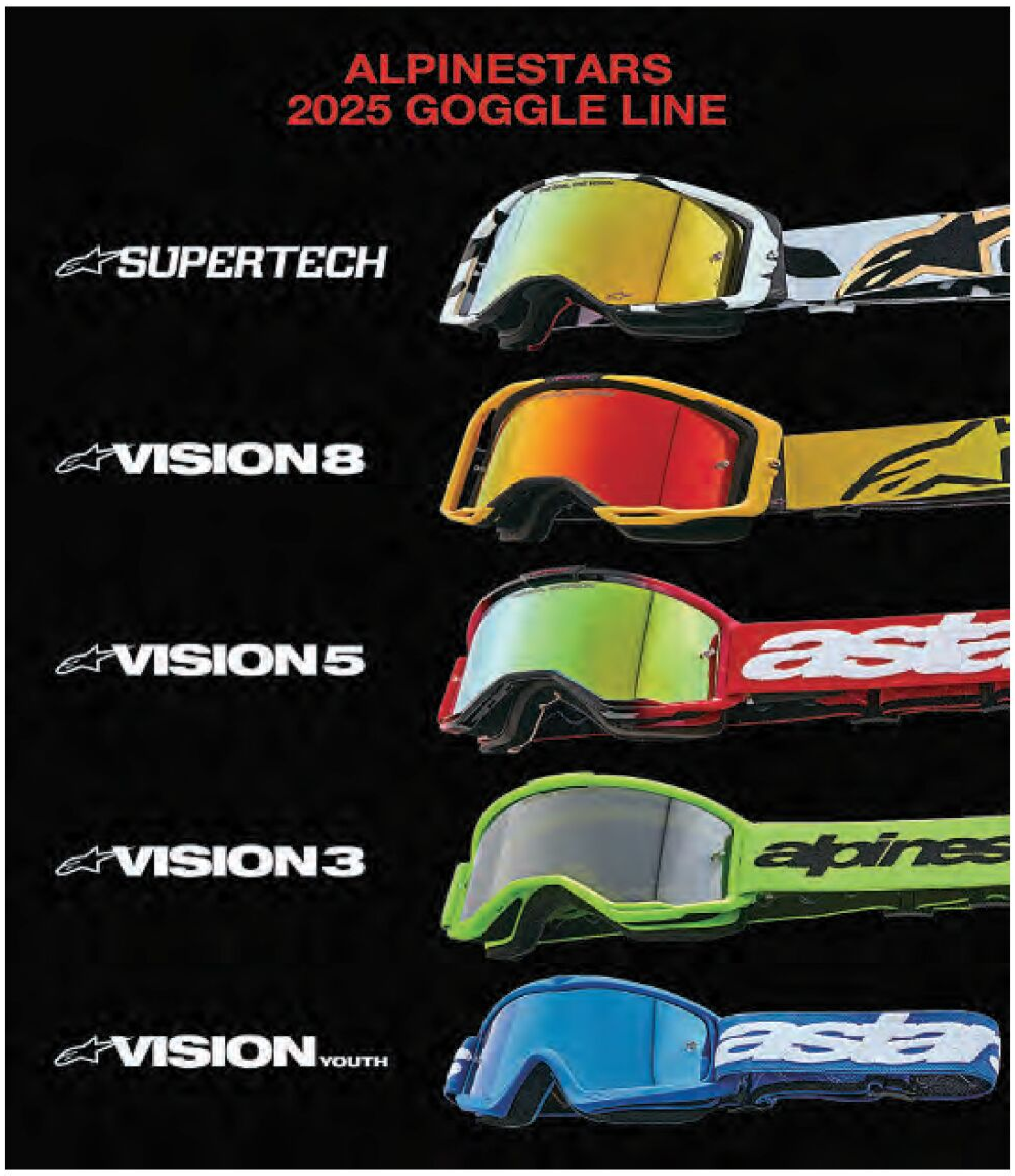
These Galfer Wave floating discs're now designed for various H-D applications, as well as for a huge range of Japanese, British, and Italian fitments. They offer precise and efficient braking, and a significant weight saving, and're for use with stock and stock-replacement calipers.

Get yours from anywhere that stocks the Zodiac range or from **www.zodiac.nl**

OXFORD FOLDING 'BAR-END MIRRORS

Perfect for busy urban areas, these mirrors can be folded away to give your bike an extra 140mm breathing space (left and right combined), and the low-profile design and innovative sprung bearing hinge mechanism allow the mirrors to be folded in when not needed to take up less space. They can be fitted above or below the handlebar(s); offer 90 degrees of movement/adjustability; have 76mm diameter mirrors; 12-18mm expansion bushes; and're designed for universal fitting.

They cost just £39.99 for a pair, and you can get them from anywhere that stocks the Oxford Products range or **www.oxfordproducts.com**



ALPINESTARS GOGGLES

Alpinestars have released a huge new range of funky goggles for open-face, adventure, and retro helmets, in a massive choice of colours, styles and finishes – far too many to go into here. Best thing you can do is go and have a look around any shop that stocks the Alpinestars range or at **www.alpinestars.com**

KODLIN NEXT LEVEL 2-1 EXHAUST

Made by the Italian manufacturer Zard, the new Kodlin Next Level 2-into-1 systems for H-D M8 Softails and Touring models're made from AISI 304 stainless steel, and have visible TIG welds, resulting in an aggressive works finish that looks as good as it sounds. They're Euro 5 approved for 2018-24 Softails and 2017-24 Tourers, and you can get them from anywhere that stocks the Motorcycle Storehouse range or direct from **www.motorcyclestorehouse.com**

SIERRA DESIGNS HIGH SIDE 3000 1P TENT

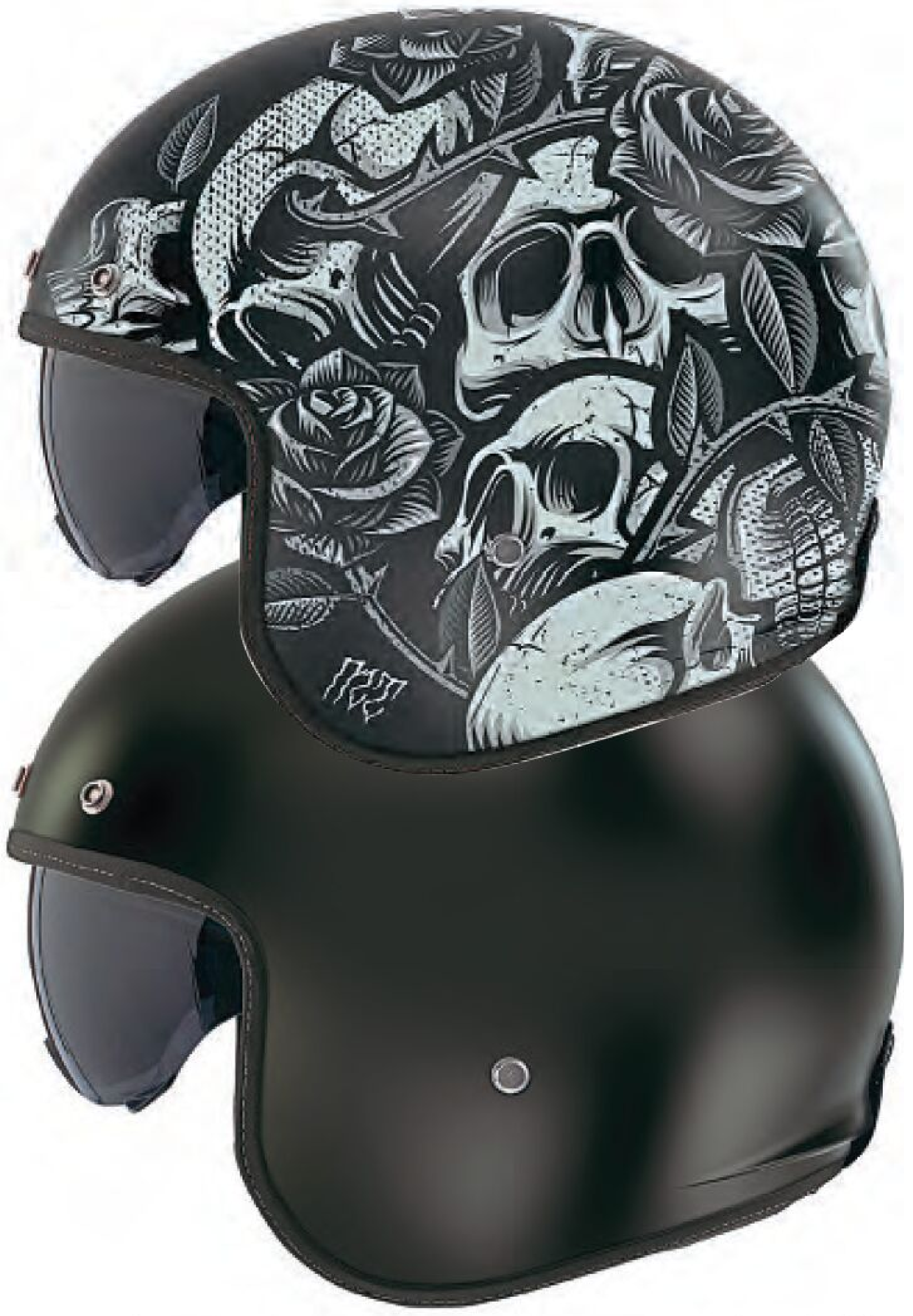
Size and simplicity go hand-in-hand in this lightweight, one-person tent that's ideal for packing on a bike, and provides a maximum amount of space at a minimum amount of weight, thanks in part to its pre-bent poles and distinct tunnel-style build. Once set up, the awning can be extended for extra storage, or better ventilation, using the two vestibule zippers, and when it comes time to break down your camp, the 12-inch pole sections pack away efficiently. The tent's pole geometry creates a 'high side' over the door, to maximise liveable space and minimise weight, and packs up easily into the provided burrito bag.

RRP is £280, but you can get it for less if you shop around. Get more info' from **www.sierradesigns.com**

KELTY CAMPING LOVESEAT

The Kelty Low-Loveseat is a camping-friendly, folding, two-seat couch with a lower base to ensure you're not towering over the campfire or blocking anyone's view of the stage, and a relaxed, slightly reclined design means you're sitting comfortably to chill. It scores extra points for its durable steel frame, insulated drinks holders, and its roll-tote carry bag.

It costs £120 from various retailers or direct from **www.kelty.com**



MT HELMETS LE MANS 2 OPEN-FACES

These MT Le Mans 2 helmets're brimming with personality and, in addition to their outstanding safety features, their distinctive design exudes a high degree of style, too. They're certified to ECE 22.06 standard; weigh just 1,100 grams (just over a kilogram); have hypoallergenic interior fabrics that're removable and washable, and micrometric closure with double tooth retention; an integrated sun visor; and retro-styled imitation leather inserts and finishes.

Available in two shell sizes (XS to M, and L to XXL), they cost from £79.99 from anywhere that stocks the Oxford Products range or direct from **www.oxfordproducts.com**

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Letters

NEED TO AGREE, OR EVEN DISAGREE, WITH SOMETHING YOU'VE SEEN IN THE MAG?
HEARD A BLOODY AWFUL JOKE YOU THINK WE SHOULD GROAN AT?
EMAIL **NIK@BACKSTREETHEROES.COM**

star LETTER

This month's Star Letter wins a pair of **WEISE NOMAD 120 GLOVES (RRP £69.99)** Warm, waterproof and well designed, Nomad gloves have got what it takes to keep you riding through the cold and wet winter months. Featuring full grain leather and textile construction, with a waterproof Hipora® membrane and 120gsm Thinsulate™ inner liner. Plus a two-layer storm cuff closure system and touchscreen compatible fingers. Find out more at **www.weiseclothing.com**

DEAR BSH,

One of your articles recently was describing the advent of the MX bikes in the old days, so I thought I'd send you some old pics of my DT250MX – I don't know how those forks never sheared off when I used to jump it!

My first jump I'll remember as long as I live. I got my speed set in third gear, hit the mud wall on a building site foundation, and feared coming off the back as the bike set sail skywards. I leaned forward, and the bike responded accordingly. As we transitioned into a very sharp head-down collision angle, all I could do was brace for impact and await the inevitable shearing off of the forks. Somehow, my balance was such that the bike nearly flipped right over, but it didn't. We sped along on the front wheel like a wheelbarrow for a considerable distance before the rear wheel dropped into its rightful position and I rode away, disaster averted.

I learnt what I'd done wrong, and went straight back round for another go. This time I pulled back a little too much, and nearly came off the back, but then got a flatter landing sorted. (We never knew about revving the engine, or braking mid-flight in those days – pure guesswork.)

Great fun!

TIM OAKLEY

DEAR BSH,

I've seen mention in the press that the Government may want to bring in pay-per-mile charging? Perhaps they should alter the cost based on the weight of the vehicle, which'd mean motorcycles'd get a fairer deal than with a blanket uniform charge, and the drivers of unnecessarily big, heavy vehicles'd contribute towards repairing the greater damage their vehicles cause to the roads infrastructure.

It'd also encourage more efficient use of vehicles, and public transport, where applicable. Imagine taking some of those one-person-in-a-big-car types and charging them what they cost in pothole repair. In fact, if they bring in per-mile charging in cities, it'd encourage the use of electric bicycles and scooters, etc., two wheels in general, for local journeys. Even a trike or sidecar combination can be more cost-effective than a modern 'small' car (which these days've become quite portly, like their middle-aged drivers).

DAVID GORDON

DEAR BSH,

Razor rain – the 5-valve, 5-hour, FZ750, transformation after a burnout. Sometimes you ride so hard, with such anger, that you step through the tornado of engine fire into the calm wind over the fairings. And the noise is a wash. Cleaning you of your sin, all your worry, all your burden. All your dirt is left behind, torn from you. And you remember nothing. You look onwards to what you know to be everything now... it's just you and the machine.

Like what's in the soft music at four in the morning, walking home, the rain blinds you from the dirt it washes away. Interactions collapse on the road. Base human nature observed and as soon forgotten. The road is a circus to the child in time I become on the back of this fire-breather. My world falling away now with mirror smashing effect. Reality splintering, tears dragged across the bike, I always escape the traffic's bite.

The FZ is the mirror's edge at the power band. A third snort of petroleum. I'm just far away now. No one can touch me between here and there. No razor can cut me but the one I ride along. Time is made at the call of the whip in my wrist. I tame this universe, invisible to its constraints upon the fine cut I make with my furious front wheel.

Neither where or between. I still want it, now and fast. Destroy my pathetic life. Go faster. Lean harder. Get closer. To the end of days. Where the sun sleeps. And our souls remain. Give me speed. Give me power. Give me grace. Give me glory. In the last place it can be found… I'll meet you on the road.

JAMES LINNELL

DEAR BSH,

Or is it Classic Choppers and Bobbers Magazine? According to your July issue, BSH coined the term 'streetfighter' way back in 1987, but you seem to have largely abandoned them. Only three've been featured this year and, even then, you could argue one was actually a chop. Throw us some tidy streetfighters from this century, or at least the '90s. Please.

GAZ

We did that back in the mid 2010s, Gaz, and it was universally not popular – BSH folk didn't want to see streetfighters, and Streetfighters folk didn't want to buy BSH, so… we can also only show what's out there – there aren't many suitably 'custom' streetfighters these days, they're all, sadly, a bit of a muchness, y'know?

DEAR BSH,

Mel, the wife of John Callaghan, would love to thank you for the beautiful tribute you did for her husband – she was overwhelmed by it. She's put it with all of John's artwork as a reminder of the artwork that has appeared in BSH,

She'd also like to thank all bikers who've had artwork done by John and, as he was a biker himself, she wishes everyone to have a nice ride through life, wherever it takes them.

MELV

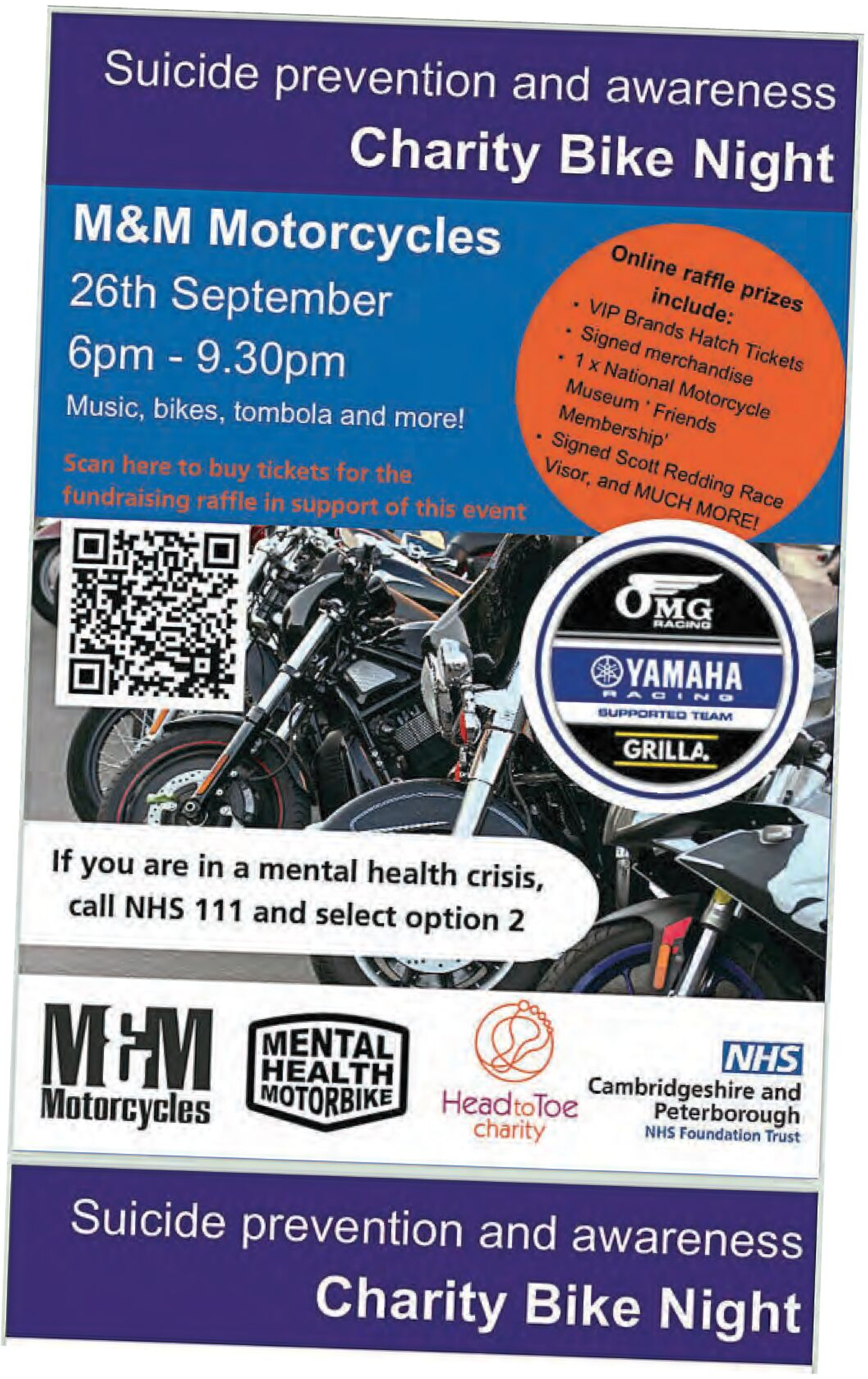
DEAR BSH,

I wanted to provide you an update our Suicide Prevention & Awareness evening. It took place on 26 September at M&M Motorcycles in Waterbeach, Cambs. Approximately 70 people braved the rain and flooding to join us, along with Mental Health Motorbike, and Andy's Man Club.

What was positive was that men did talk to us about losing someone to suicide, and the impact it had on them – they didn't want support, just someone to talk to. We had men ask for help as they didn't know how to cope after losing a family member to suicide, and we were able to have positive conversations on the night, and they've contacted me since to say that they now have a plan of not only how to look after their own welfare, but also how to support their family. Messages are coming from men on social media, telling me I've done a great thing in trying to raise awareness in the motorcycle community, and I wanted to thank all of you for coming back to me as I believe we had a positive impact in the motorcycle community.

The trust website, if you want to get in touch, is **www.cpft.nhs.uk**

EMYR PRICE



Suicide prevention and awareness
Charity Bike Night

M&M Motorcycles
26th September
6pm - 9.30pm
Music, bikes, tombola and more!

Scan here to buy tickets for the fundraising raffle in support of this event

Online raffle prizes include:
- VIP Brands Hatch Tickets
- Signed merchandise
- 1 x National Motorcycle Museum ' Friends Membership'
- Signed Scott Redding Race Visor, and MUCH MORE!

If you are in a mental health crisis, call NHS 111 and select option 2

Suicide prevention and awareness
Charity Bike Night

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M&M Motorcycles
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• EARLY BIRD ADVANCE (FROM 8:00AM) - £9
• UNDER 16S FREE
newarkautojumble.co.uk

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• UNDER 16S FREE
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AUTOJUMBLE.INFO

Events

ADVERTISE YOUR EVENTS HERE FOR FREE AND GET THEM SEEN BY EVERYONE IN BIKERDOM! EMAIL THE INFO TO **NIK@BACKSTREETHEROES.COM**

DECEMBER

1 Dec: Bike Day & Ace Cafe Club Day Xmas Meet at the Ace Cafe, London. More info from www.london.acecafe.com

1 Dec: Christmas Toy Run at Sammy Miller Motorcycle Museum, Bashley Crossroads, New Milton, Hamps (BH25 5SZ). More info from www.sammymiller.co.uk

1 Dec: Reading CMA's Reading Toy Run from Thames Valley Science Park, Gateway Building, Collegiate Square, South Ave, Reading, Berks (RG2 9LH) ar 11am. More info' from www.readingtoyrun.blogspot.com

1 Dec: Wishmakers' Surprise Event at The Smokehouse Ormesby, The Grange Hotel, Yarmouth Rd, Ormesby St Margaret, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk (NR29 3QG). More info' from Facebook.

5 Dec: Krazy Horse Film Night (Easy Rider) at the Abbeygate Cinema, Hatter St, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk (IP33 1LZ). More info' from www.krazyhorse.co.uk

6-8 Dec: Druids MCC's Icy Ale Rally. Tickets £19 prebook only. More info' from www.druidsmcc.com

7 Dec: Unwanted MCC's Kids' Party at The Rockbar, Shobnall Sports & Social Club, Shobnall Road, Burton upon Trent, Staffs (DE14 2BB). More info from www.unwantedmcc.co.uk

7 Dec: Dusty's Customs' Christmas Charity Night at the Ugie House Hotel, Church Rd, Keith, Aberdeen (AB55 5BR). Tickets £10. More info' from 07724 136822 or Facebook.

7 Dec: Mary Rose Riders' Mary Rose Toy Run from the Mary Rose Academy, Gisors Rd, Southsea, Portsmouth, Southsea, Hamps (PO4 8GT) at 12.30pm. More info' from Facebook.

7 Dec: Sausage Saturday at Alf's Motorcycles, Dominion Rd, Worthing, W. Sussex (BN14 8JP). More info' from www.alfsmotorcycles.co.uk

7 Dec: The Dollies' Christmas Toy Run from the Commons Carpark, Commons Road, Pembroke (SA71 4EB) at 1pm. More info' from Facebook.

8 Dec: Unwanted MCC's Toy Run at The Rockbar, Shobnall Sports & Social Club, Shobnall Road, Burton upon Trent, Staffs (DE14 2BB). More info from www.unwantedmcc.co.uk

8 Dec: 'Normous Newark Autojumble at the Newark Showground, Lincoln Road, Coddington, Newark, Notts (NG24 2NY). More info from www.newarkautojumble.co.uk

8 Dec: Bike Day at the Ace Cafe, London. More info from www.london.acecafe.com

8 Dec: Cambridge Volunteer Bikers' Great Mince Pie Run from McDonalds, Abbey Retail Park, Harrison Way, St. Ives, Cambs (PE27 4AE) at 9am. More info' from Facebook.

8 Dec: Roughley's Toy Run from Tesco Extra, Tiviot Way, Stockport (SK1 2BT) at 10.30am. More info' from www.roughleysbikeshow.com

14 Dec: Unwanted MCC's Christmas Party at The Rockbar, Shobnall Sports & Social Club, Shobnall Road, Burton upon Trent, Staffs (DE14 2BB). More info from www.unwantedmcc.co.uk

14 Dec: QRRA Christmas Party at The Clubhouse, off Faversham Rd, Newnham, Kent (ME9 0BE). More info' from www.qrra.co.uk

14 Dec: 4Fs' Christmas Party at Trimley Sports & Social Club, High Rd, Trimley St Martin, Felixstowe, Suffolk (IP11 0RJ). More info' from Facebook.

14 Dec: Coventry Riders Action Group's Christmas Toy Run from Bikers Paradise, Portway Cl, Coventry (CV4 9UY) at 11am. Tickets £5. More info' from www.coventryridersactiongroup.co.uk

14 Dec: Pinkertons' Toy Run from Swindon RFC, New Pavilion, Greenbridge Rd, Swindon, Wilts (SN3 3LA) at 10.30am. More info' from Facebook.

15 Dec: Xmas Toy Run at 10.30am at the Ace Cafe, London. More info from www.london.acecafe.com

15 Dec: Xmas Carol Service at the Ace Cafe, London. More info from www.london.acecafe.com

15 Dec: Mablethorpe Sand Racing at The Beach, Mablethorpe, Lincs. More info' from www.mablethorpesandracing.co.uk

15 Dec: Southport Cruisers' Christmas Ride from Tour de Franks Café, Ringtail Rd, Burscough, Ormskirk, Lancs (L40 8JY) at 10am. More info' from Facebook.

20 Dec: Christmas Ride-Out to ELF (Exeter Leukemia Fund) from Rainbow Moto, Unit 2, Owen House, Lorn Haven Business Park, Newton Abbot, Devon (TQ13 7FF) at 10.30am. Please bring a gift. More info' from 01364 652321 or Rainbowmotorbikeco@gmail.com

22 Dec: Bike Day at the Ace Cafe, London. More info from www.london.acecafe.com

22 Dec: Scunthorpe X Dressers & S&S Bikers'

Christmas Toy Run from the Black Beauty, Keddington Rd, Bottesford, Scunthorpe, Lincs (DN17 2QU) at 12.30pm. More info' from Facebook.

26 Dec: Cold Turkey Meet at the Ace Cafe, London. More info from www.london.acecafe.com

29 Dec: Bike Day at the Ace Cafe, London. More info from www.london.acecafe.com

31 Dec: Unwanted MCC's New Year's Eve Party at The Rockbar, Shobnall Sports & Social Club, Shobnall Road, Burton upon Trent, Staffs (DE14 2BB). More info from www.unwantedmcc.co.uk

JANUARY 2025

1 Jan: New Year's Day Motorcycle Meet at Sammy Miller Motorcycle Museum, Bashley Cross Road, New Milton, Hamps (BH25 5SZ). More info from www.sammymiller.co.uk

2 Jan: Krazy Horse Film Night (The Blues Brothers) at the Abbeygate Cinema, Hatter St, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk (IP33 1LZ). More info' from www.krazyhorse.co.uk

5 Jan: New Year Autojumble at Whitewebbs Museum of Transport, Whitewebbs Rd, Enfield, London (EN2 9HW). More info' from www.whitewebbsmuseum.co.uk

18 Jan: Unwanted MCC's Birthday Party at The Rockbar, Shobnall Sports & Social Club, Shobnall Road, Burton upon Trent, Staffs (DE14 2BB). More info from www.unwantedmcc.co.uk

18 Jan: HDRCGB Suffolk's Winter Party at Woolpit Village Hall, Mill Ln, Woolpit, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk (IP30 9QX). More info' from Facebook.

19 Jan: Mablethorpe Sand Racing at The Beach, Mablethorpe, Lincs. More info' from www.mablethorpesandracing.co.uk

24-26 Jan: Ogri MCC's Kickstart Rally at the Ogri Clubhouse, Kemble Airfield, Gloucs (GL7 6BQ). More info' from www.ogrimcc.org

24-26 Jan: Moddey-Dhoo MCC's Late Christmas Party at the Hydro Hotel, Queens Promenade, Douglas, Isle of Man (IM2 4NF). More info' from www.moddeydhoomcc.co.uk

26 Jan: Talmag 50th Anniversary Pre65 Trial at Hungry Hill, off the A325, Aldershot, Hants (GU11 1PZ). More info' from www.talmag.co.uk

FEBRUARY

2 Feb: Mablethorpe Sand Racing at The Beach, Mablethorpe, Lincs. More info' from www.mablethorpesandracing.co.uk

6 Feb: Krazy Horse Film Night (Wild Hogs) at the Abbeygate Cinema, Hatter St, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk (IP33 1LZ). More info' from www.krazyhorse.co.uk

8-9 Feb: The Kustom Kulture Show at The Cable Factory, Helsinki, Finland. More info' from www.kustomkultureshow.com

15 Feb: Unwanted MCC's Valentine's Party at The Rockbar, Shobnall Sports & Social Club, Shobnall Road, Burton upon Trent, Staffs (DE14 2BB). More info from www.unwantedmcc.co.uk

16 Feb: Mablethorpe Sand Racing at The Beach, Mablethorpe, Lincs. More info' from www.mablethorpesandracing.co.uk

MARCH

2 March: Bideford Classic Motorcycle Show at Bideford Pannier Market, Market Pl, Bideford, Devon (EX39 2DR). Tickets £5. More info' from www.bidefordbikeshow.org

2 March: Mablethorpe Sand Racing at The Beach, Mablethorpe, Lincs. More info' from www.mablethorpesandracing.co.uk

6 March: Krazy Horse Film Night (Rush) at the Abbeygate Cinema, Hatter St, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk (IP33 1LZ). More info' from www.krazyhorse.co.uk

16 March: Mablethorpe Sand Racing at The Beach, Mablethorpe, Lincs. More info' from www.mablethorpesandracing.co.uk

30 March: Mablethorpe Sand Racing at The Beach, Mablethorpe, Lincs. More info' from www.mablethorpesandracing.co.uk

30 March: Ardingly Classic Bike Show & Jumble at the South of England Showground, Selsfield Rd, Haywards Heath, West Sussex (RH17 6TL). Tickets £7. More info' from www.elkpromotions.co.uk

APRIL

12-13 April: Kickback at the Three Counties Showground, Malvern, Worcs (WR13 6NW). More info' from www.Kickbackshow.com

20 April: Black Widows Bikers Sussex's Easter Egg Run from Diplocks Café, Diplocks Way, Hailsham, E. Sussex (BN27 3JF) at 8am. More info' from www.blackwidowsbikers.com or Facebook.

20 April: Fort Paull American Car/Bike & Hot Rod Show at Fort Paull, Battery Rd, Paull, Hull Yorks (HU12 8FP). More info' from Facebook.

21 April: Ashford Classic Motorcycle Jumble at Ashford Livestock Market, Orbital Park, Ashford, Kent (TN24 0HB). Tickets £10. More info' from www.elkpromotions.co.uk

MAY

2-4 May: Yorkshire MAG's Into The Valley Rally. More info' from www.mapevents.co.uk

10 May: Hemsby Wheels Fest at Long Beach Tent & Touring Site, Long Beach Estate, Hemsby, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk (NR29 4JD). More info' from Facebook.

15-18 May: Biker Fest Italy at Lignano Sabbiadoro, Udine, Italy. More info' from www.bikerfest.it

16-18 May: MT Heads MCC's It's Going Down in the Lakes Again at Chester Lakes Campsite, Church Rd, Chester (CH4 9LQ). More info' from Facebook.

17 May: Feltwell Anglo-American Car & Bike Show at The Playing Fields, Paynes Lane, Feltwell, Norfolk (IP26 4BA). More info' from www.feltwellcarshow.uk

18 May: Distinguished Gentleman's Ride at sites worldwide. More info' from www.gentlemansride.com

23-25 May: The Smoking Dog Rock & Custom Show at Bishops Auckland Rugby Club, West Mills Playing Fields, Bridge Rd, Bishop Auckland, Co Durham (DL14 7PA). Tickets £15 prebook or £20 on gate. More info' from 07931 177448 or countydurham34@yahoo.com

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Events

25 May: Bideford Bike Show at The Big Sheep, Abbotsham Rd, Abbotsham, Bideford, Devon (EX39 5AP). More info' from www.bidefordbikeshow.org

26 May: Ashford Classic Motorcycle Jumble at Ashford Livestock Market, Orbital Park, Ashford, Kent (TN24 0HB). Tickets £10. More info' from www.elkpromotions.co.uk

30 May-1 June: The Pott's Bike Bash at Castle Cary RFC, Brook House Field, Castle Cary, Somerset (BA7 7PF). Tickets £20 prebook or £25 on gate. More info' from potts666tcb@gmail.com

30th May-1 June: South West Chopper Fest at The Otter Vale Wild Camping, Homsleigh Barns, Honiton, Devon (EX14 9NP). Tickets £55. More info' from www.southwestchopperfest.co.uk

JUNE

5-8 June: Unwanted MCC's Bike, Trike & Custom Show at The Rockbar, Shobnall Sports & Social Club, Shobnall Road, Burton upon Trent, Staffs (DE14 2BB). More info from www.unwantedmcc.co.uk

6-8 June: Chopper Freakers Band's Chopperfest at Blénod-lès-Pont-à-Mousson, 54700, France. More info' from Facebook.

12-15 June: European H.O.G. Rally at Medulin, Croatia. More info' from www.harley-davidson.com

13-15 June: Bildt Not Bought Chopperfest at St. Annaparochie, Holland. More info' from Instagram.

13-15 June: Dutch Hardly-Rideables' Rat meeting at MVC Rattlesnakes, Sportlaan 9a, 4571 CA Axel, Netherlands. More info' from www.rataplan-ratbikeclub.nl

18 June: Royston & District MCC's Royston & District Motorcycle Show at the Eternit Sports & Social Club, Whaddon Rd, Meldreth, Royston (SG8 5RL). More info' from Facebook.

19-22 June: Estonians MCC's Barnstormer Rally at the Rally Field. Runswick Lane, Runswick Bay, N. Yorks (TS13 5HR). Tickets £20 prebook or £25 on gate. More info' from 07533 204101 or Estoniansmcc@outlook.co.uk

19-22 June: The Farmyard Party at Duncombe Park, Helmsley, Yorks (YO62 5EB). More info' from www.mapevents.co.uk

22 June: Custom & Classic Bike & Car Show at the Royal Gunpowder Mills, Beaulieu Drive, Waltham Abbey, Essex (EN9 1JY). Tickets £10. More info' from www.customandclassicshow.co.uk or Facebook.

29 June: Romney Marsh Ride-In Show & Bike Jumble at Hamstreet, Kent (TN26 2JD). Tickets £5. More info' from www.elkpromotions.co.uk

JULY

4-6 July: Antelope MCC's Rally at Barker Butts RFC, The Bob Coward Memorial Ground, Pickford Grange Ln, Coventry (CV5 9AR). Tickets £15 weekend or £5 days. More info' from Facebook.

4-6 July: MPH Vintage Sprint at RAF Deenthorpe, near Weldon, Northants (NN17 3AN). Weekend tickets £65, Sunday day ticket £15. More info' from www.mphvintagesprint.co.uk

10-13 July: Rock & Bike Fest at the Notts & Derby Showground, Longmoor Lane, Long Eaton, Derbys (DE72 2BU). Earlybird tickets £60. More info' from www.rockandbikefest.co.uk

10-13 July: Unwanted MCC's Cock Out Rally at The Rockbar, Shobnall Sports & Social Club, Shobnall Road, Burton upon Trent, Staffs (DE14 2BB). More info from www.unwantedmcc.co.uk

19 July: The 101 Run at Dreamlands, Margate, Kent. More info' from www.the101run.com

24-27 July: Rock & Blues Old School Weekender at the Coneygrey Showground, Pentrich, Derbys (DE5 3RL). More info' from www.therockandblues.com

24-27 July: Bridge Rats MCC's Rat Pack Rally at Heath RFC, Stainland Rd, North Dean, Greetland, Halifax, Yorks (HX4 8LS). More info' from www.bridgerats.com

25-27 July: Flanders Chopper Bash at a site in Belgium. More info' from www.flanderschopperbash.com

25-27th July: HAMC Lincs' Bullfrog Bash at the Coach & Horses, Tattershall Rd, Billinghay, Lincs (LN4 4DD). More info' from 07921 838694 or bullfrogbash@hellsangelsmc.co.uk

26 July: Jurassic Coast Rock & Motor Show at Hampton Farm, Hampton, Dorchester, Dorset (DT2 9D). Tickets £10. More info' from Facebook.

26-27 July: Thugfest at Thug Bike England, Site A7, Unit A4, Rednal Ind Est, West Felton, Shrewsbury, Shrops (SY11 4HS). More info' from 07462 916709 or Facebook.

27 July: Ardingly Classic Bike Show & Jumble at the South of England Showground, Selsfield Rd, Haywards Heath, West Sussex (RH17 6TL). Tickets £7. More info' from www.elkpromotions.co.uk

AUGUST

1-3 Aug: Yorkshire MAG's Yorkshire Pudding Rally. More info' from www.mapevents.co.uk

7-10 Aug: Yorkshire Rock & Bike Show at Squires Cafe Bar, Newthorpe Lane, Newthorpe, Leeds (LS25 5LX). Tickets £35 prebook or £40 on gate. More info' from www.yorkshirerocknbikeshow.co.uk

15-17 Aug: Wiltshire Motorcycle Rally at Salisbury RFC, Castle Road, Salisbury, Wilts (SP1 3SA). Tickets £35 weekend or £20 Saturday. More info' from 07783 054858 or Facebook.

22-24 Aug: Ogri MCC Summer Rally at The Clubhouse, Kemble Airfield, Kemble, Gloucs (GL7 6BQ). More info' from www.orgimcc.org

22-24 Aug: Thunder in the Glens in Aviemore, Highlands, Scotland. More info' from Facebook.

SEPTEMBER

5-7 Sept: The Trip Out at the Euston Estate, Euston, near Thetford, Norfolk. More info' from www.thetripout.co.uk

7 Sept: East Anglian Copdock Bike Show at Trinity Park, Ipswich, Suffolk (IP3 8UH).

21 Sept: Romney Marsh Ride-In Show & Bike Jumble at Hamstreet, Kent (TN26 2JD). Tickets £5. More info' from www.elkpromotions.co.uk

OCTOBER

17-19 Oct: Estonians MCC's Kindred Spirit Rally at Staithes Athletic Club, Seaton Lane, Staithes, N. Yorks (TS13 5AY). Tickets £15 prebook only. More info' from 07533 204101 or Estoniansmcc@outlook.co.uk

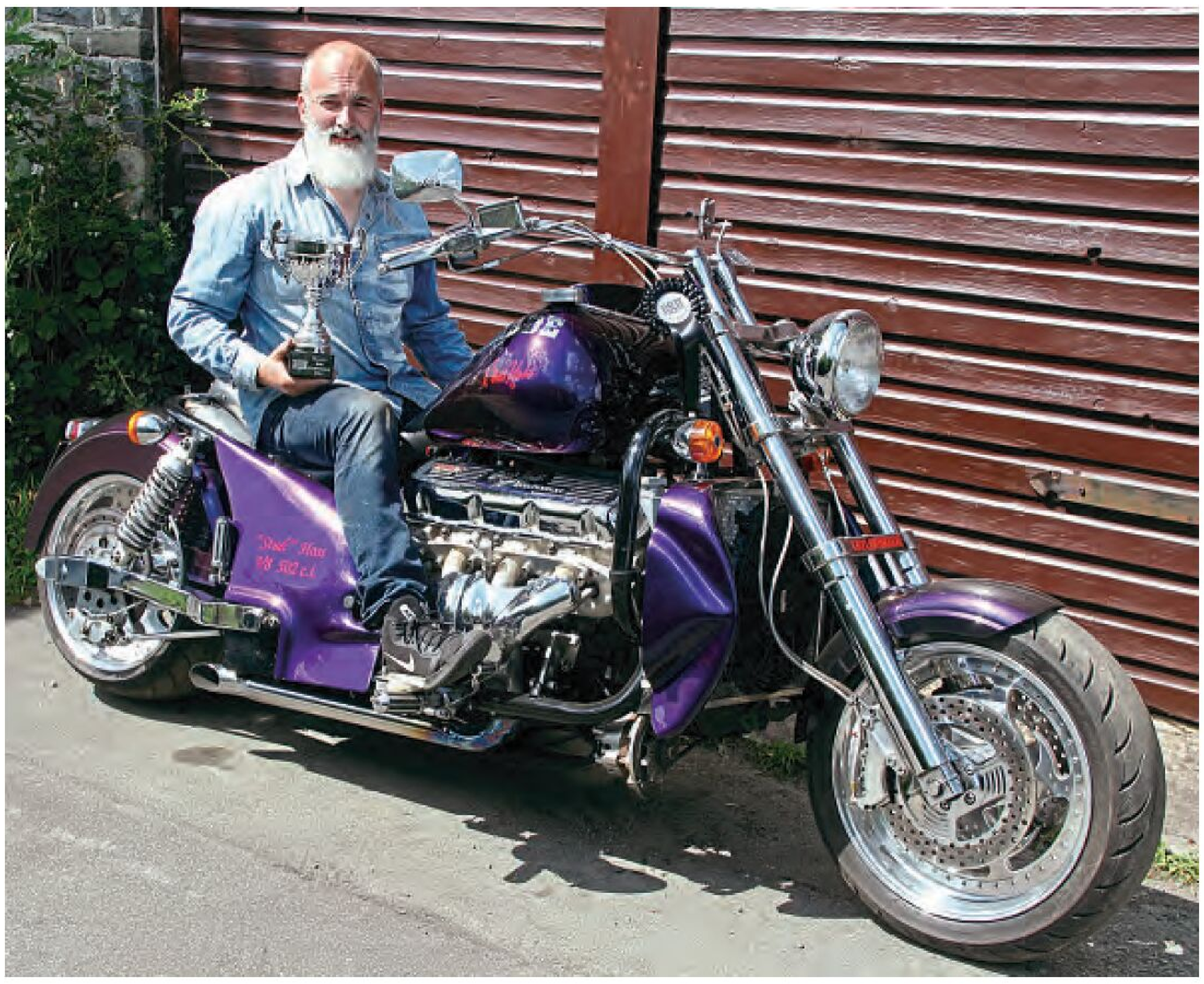
27 Oct: Ardingly Classic Bike Show & Jumble at the South of England Showground, Selsfield Rd, Haywards Heath, West Sussex (RH17 6TL). Tickets £7. More info' from www.elkpromotions.co.uk

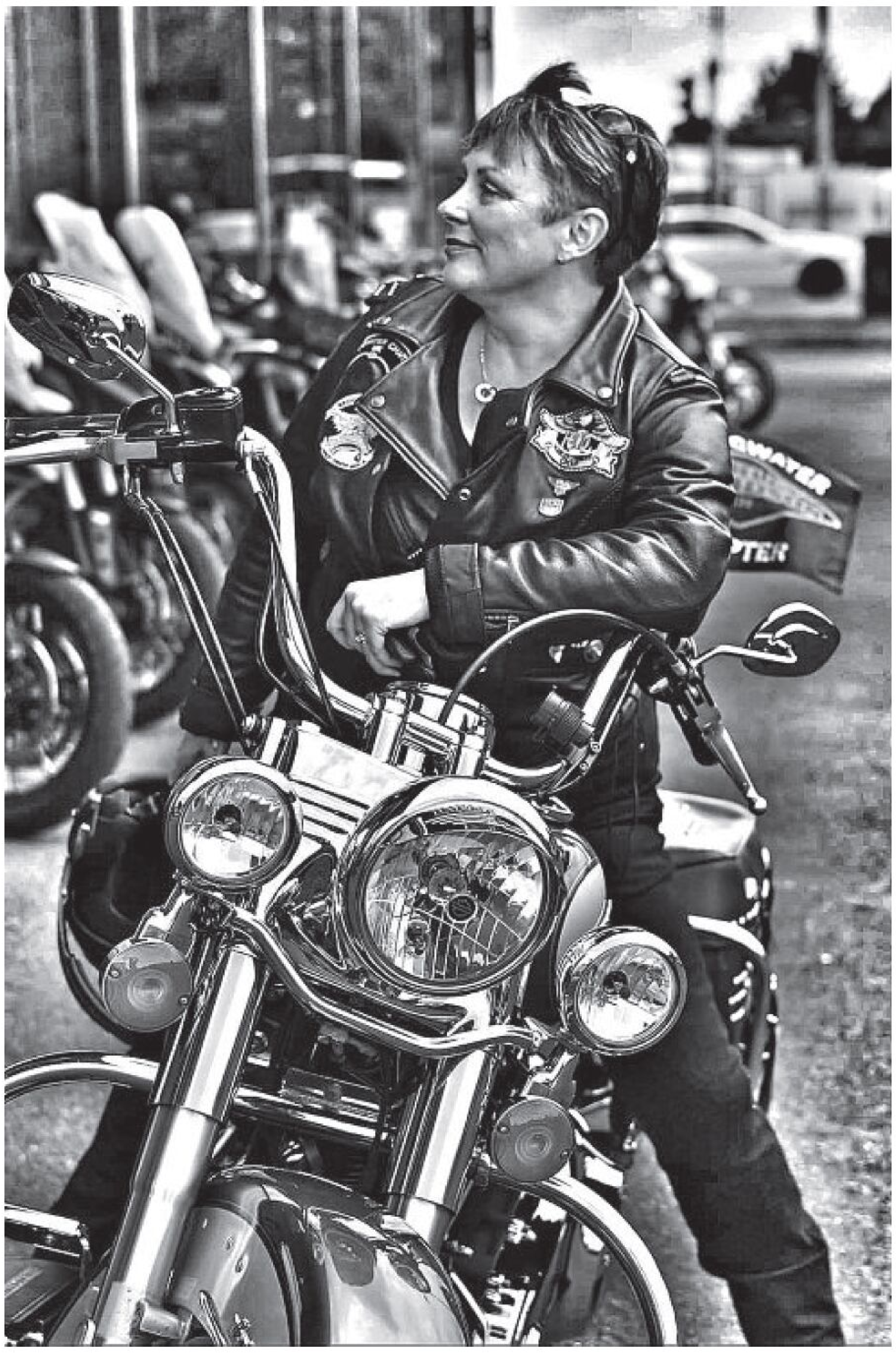
NOV

7-10 Nov: Rockers Reunited's Rock Festival at the Prince of Wales, Lord St, Southport, Merseyside (PR8 1JS). More info' from www.rockersreunited.co.uk

Readers' Lives

SEND PICS OF YOUR BIKE, YOUR LADY, YOUR BLOKE (BUT NOT YOUR DINNER, THIS ISN'T FACEBOOK) TO **NIK@BACKSTREETHEROES.COM**





ABOVE: Father Christmas' completely given up on his nine-reindeer-power sleigh these days…

BELOW: Say cheese! Stu took this pic at the Walden Bikers' 10th anniversary bike night

TOP RIGHT: Artsy moody picture of Alison on her Heritage Softail at a Bridgewater HOG event, sent in by her hubby Dave

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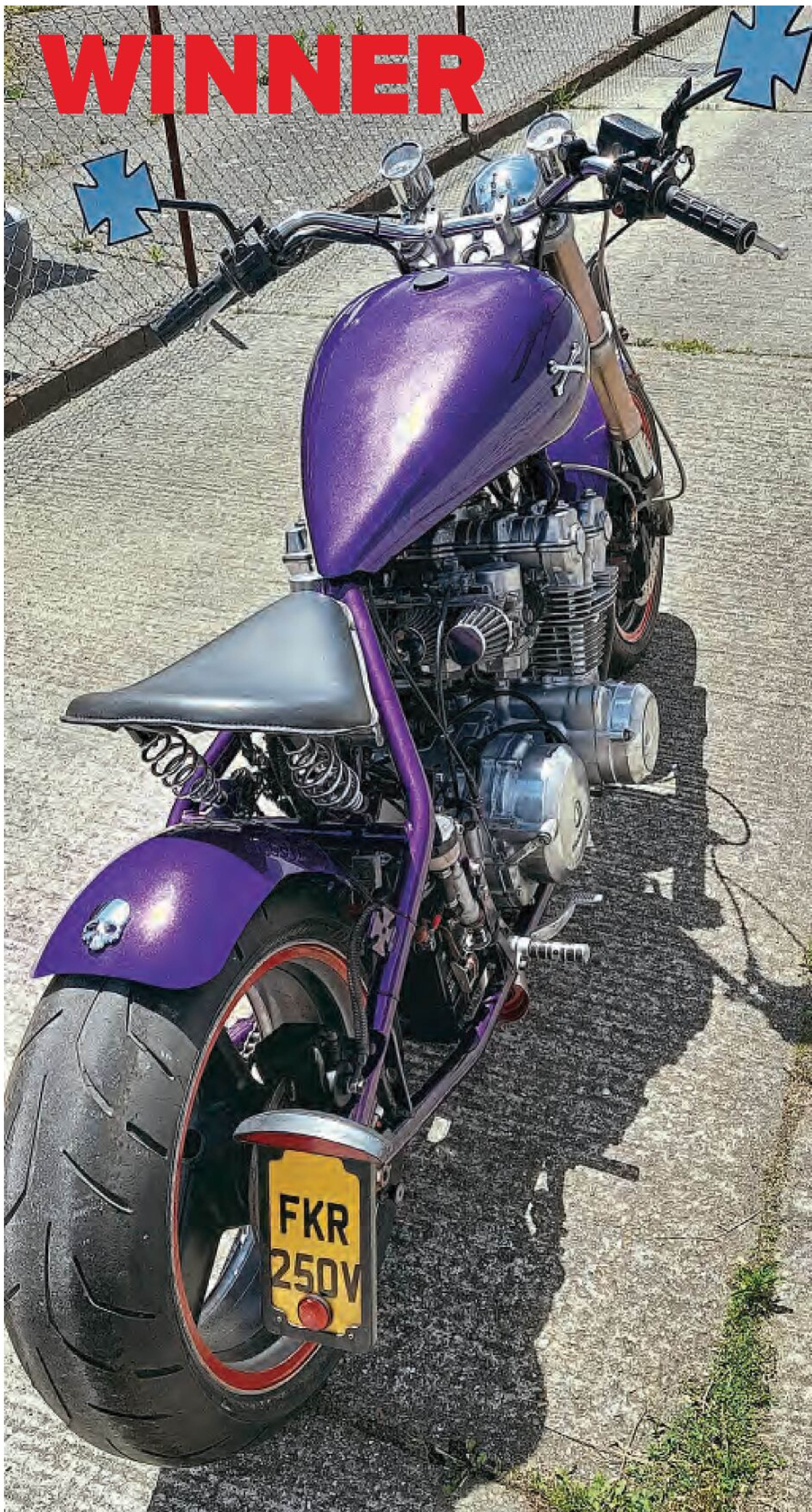


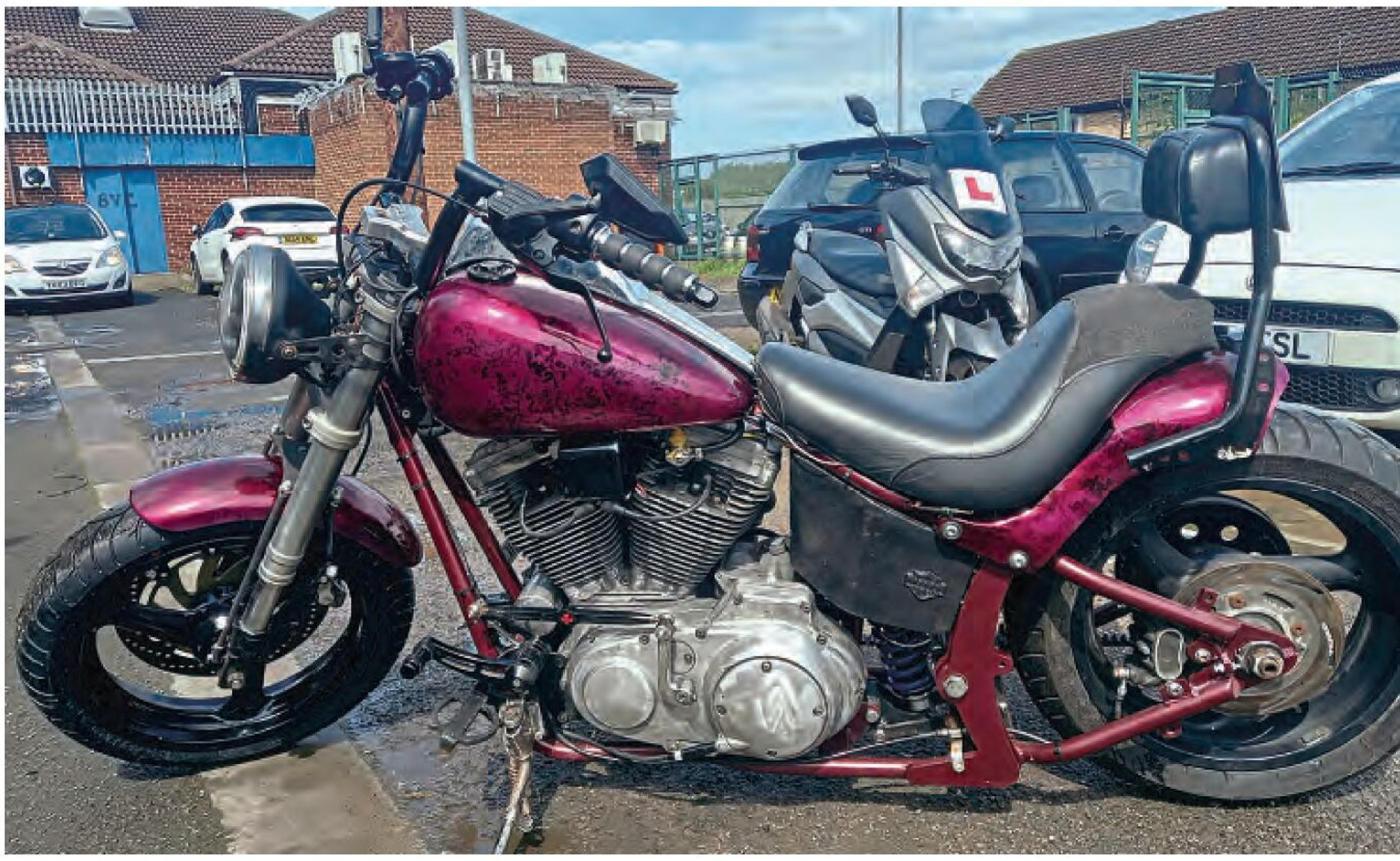
RIGHT: Harleyboy Malc promised his brother Keith, who passed away last year, he'd finish the bike they were building together – he's just waiting on the DVLA now

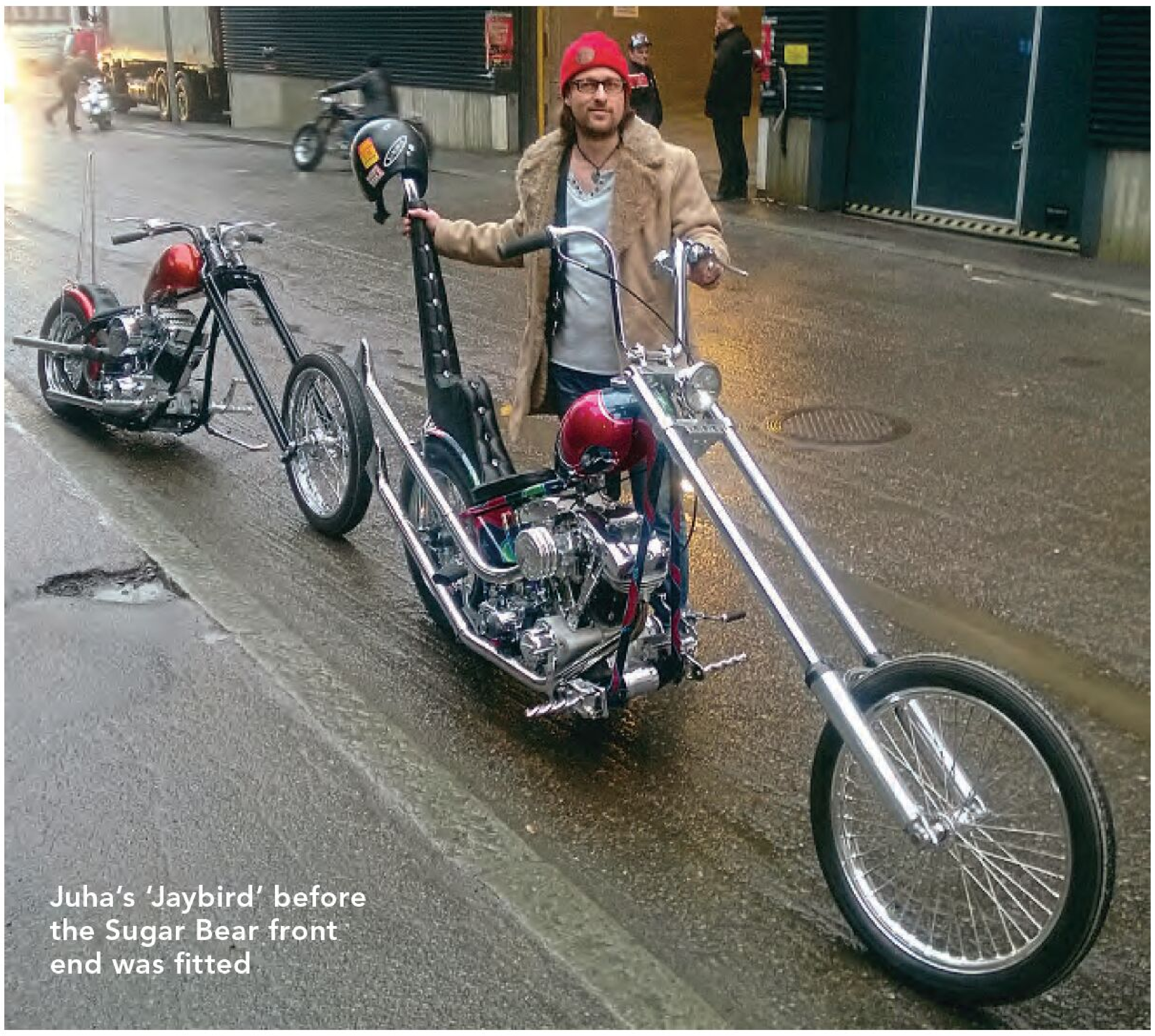
Conrad's bike stand – not the most convenient to use…

ABOVE: What did you say to the girl on your bike, Tom, to get a reaction like that?!?

The lovely Rach on Neil's Battistini's bike (that's Neil behind her), by Steve J.

BELOW: Mick's Sporty runs a Custom Cycle Development monoshock softail frame, the engine and running gear from a Buell M2, inspired and encouraged by Jerry Barzey, famous for his Sledgehammer Triumph (featured in BSH)



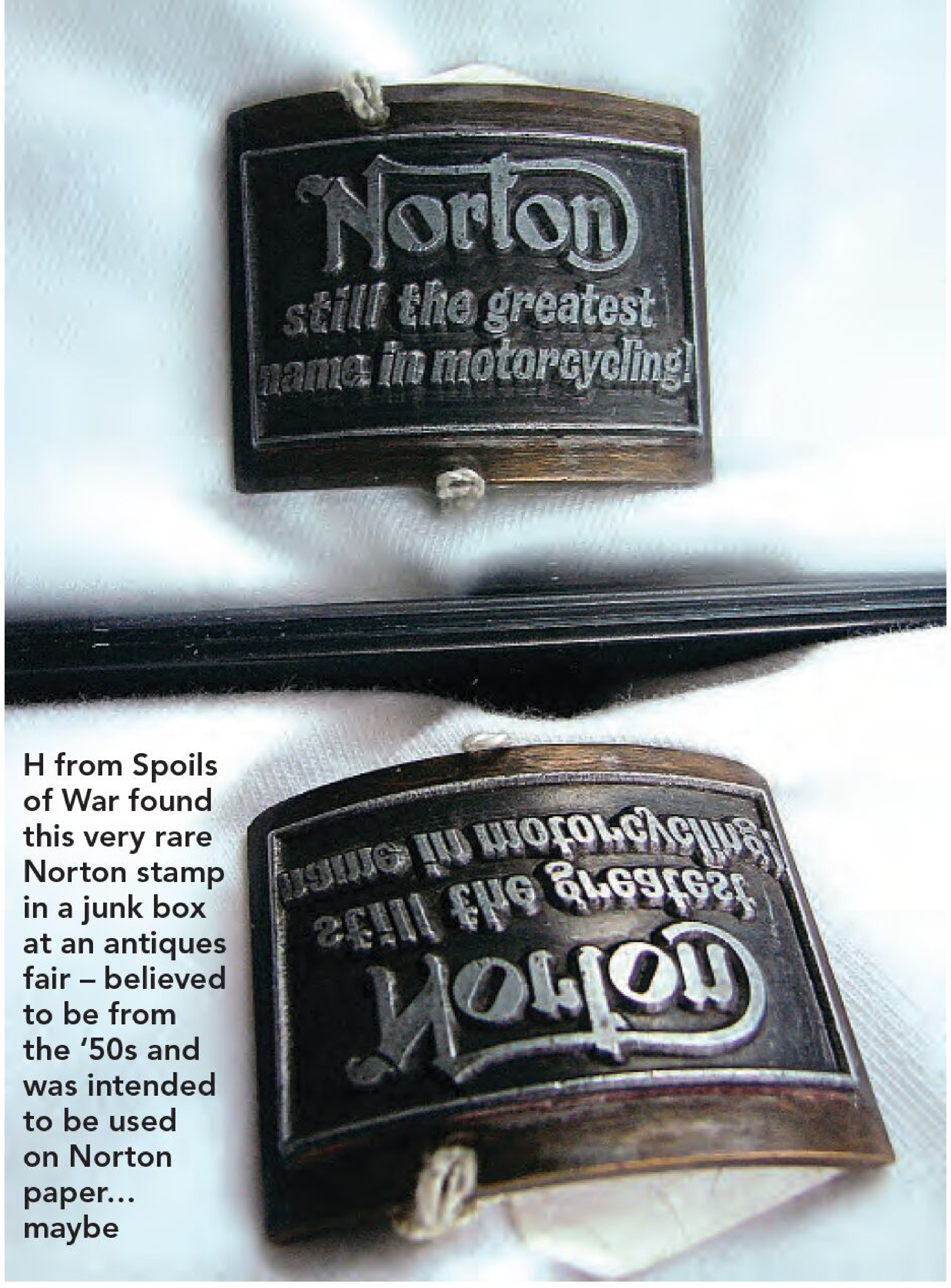


Juha's 'Jaybird' before the Sugar Bear front end was fitted

BELOW: Kip, Red Frankie from Chopper Club Nederlands' other half, won her first trophy, Best Ladies, with her stonking Sportster chop – she is so proud! Justifiably so, Kip, justifiably so!

Readers' Lives

Nickel Dime
PIRELLI
ROUTE


Norton
still the greatest
name in motorcycling!

H from Spoils of War found this very rare Norton stamp in a junk box at an antiques fair – believed to be from the '50s and was intended to be used on Norton paper… maybe

TOP LEFT: Luvverly Nickel & Dime Sporty chop at Boston Bike Night, pic by Phil T

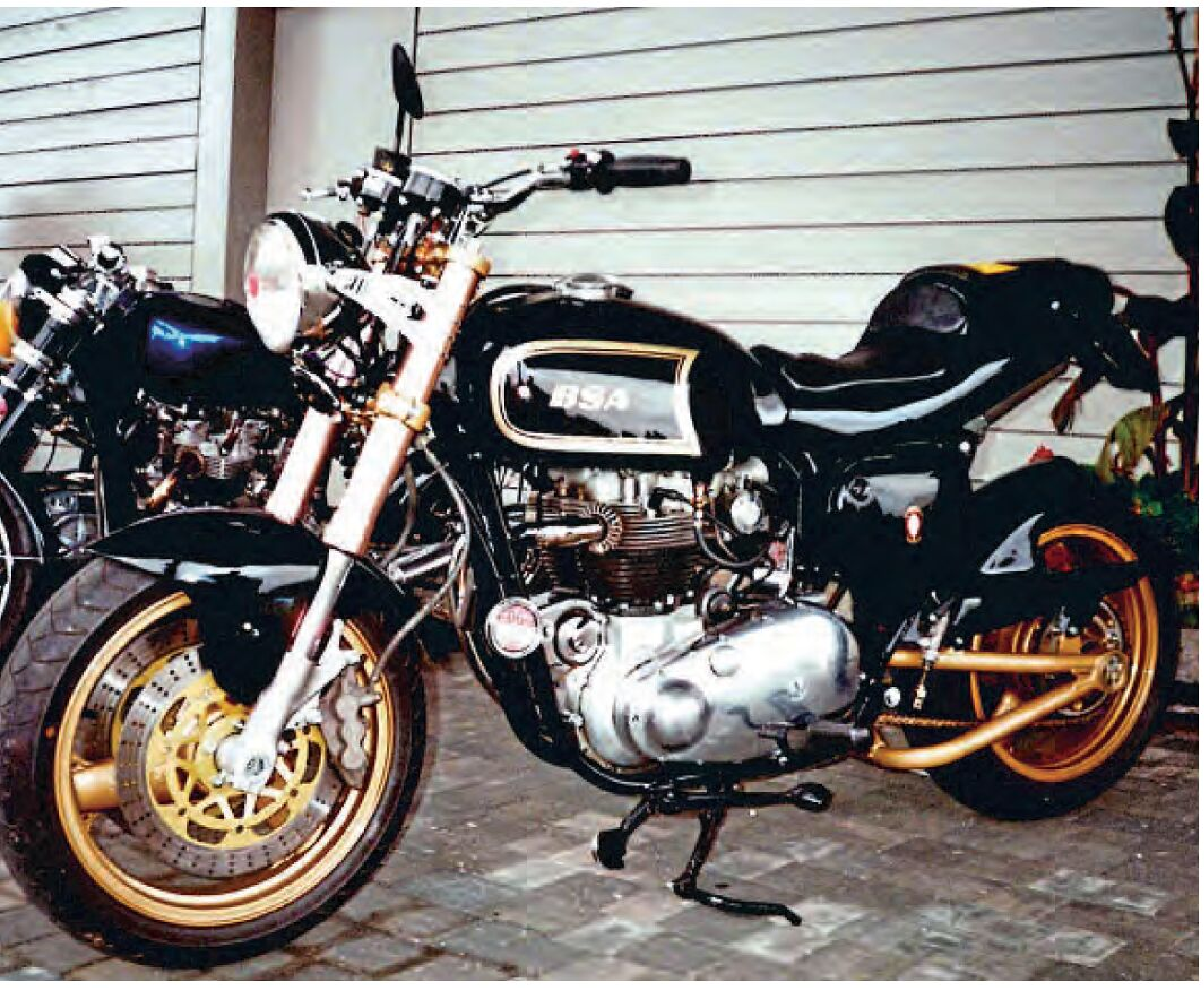
BELOW: Dean Hadfield's Hayabusa chopper! Fast as fu… er, flip, and wonderfully mad!

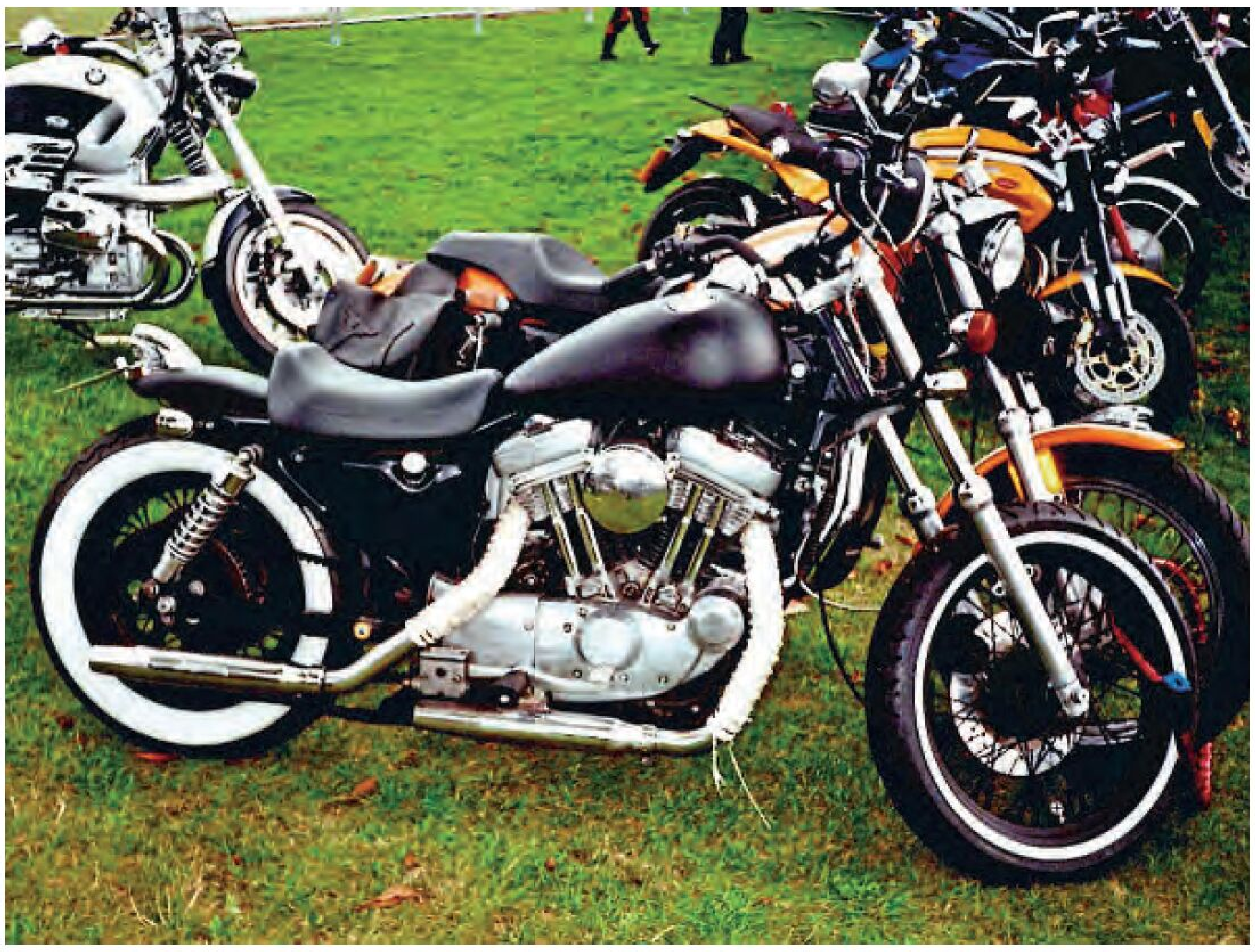
ABOVE: Dave from Hull's trike on an early-morning ride to pay his respects to the brave men of 158 Squadron at RAF Lissett, East Yorkshire

RIGHT: Funky 'pipe Triumph at the Hay Ride, pic by Clive

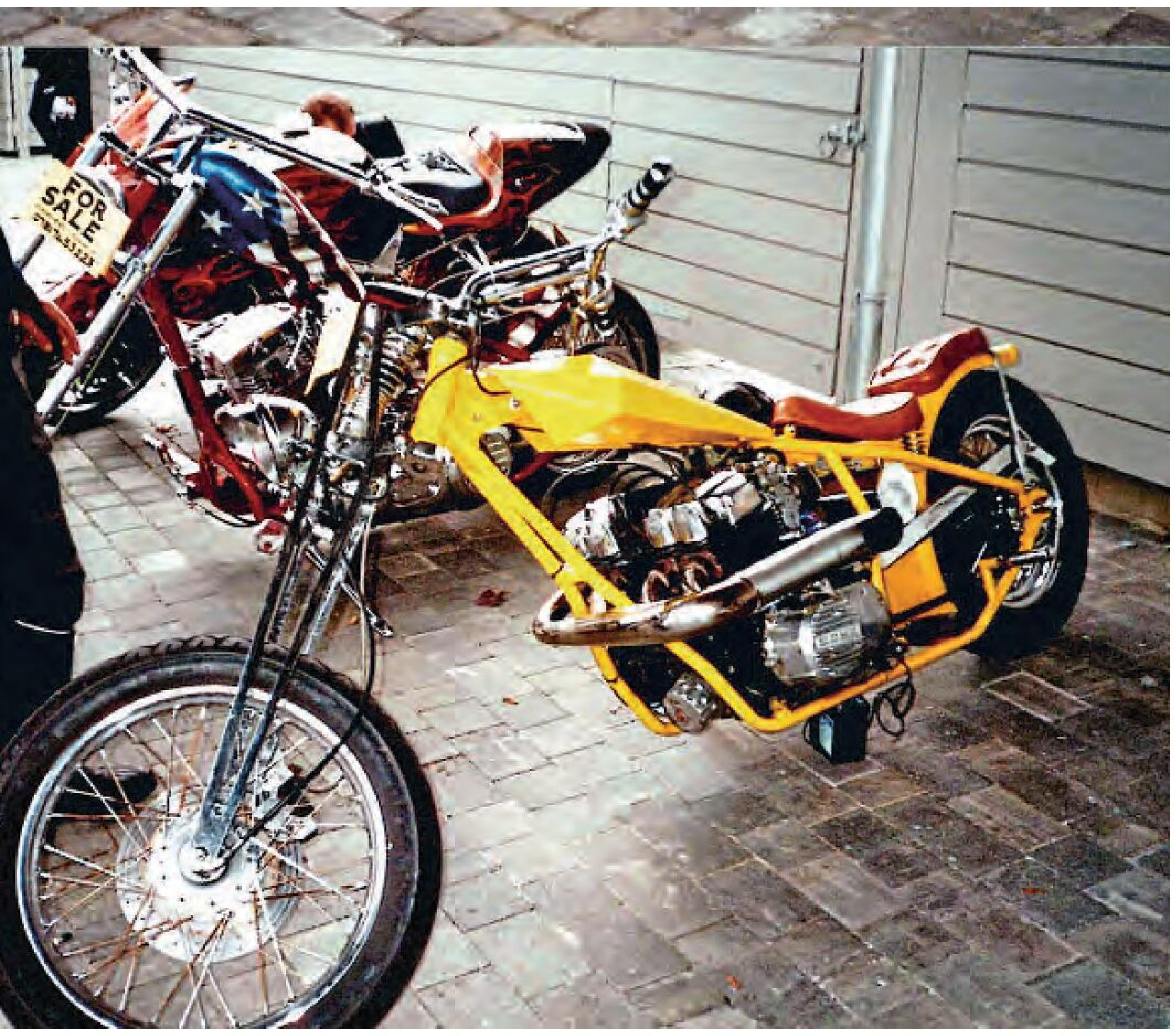
BELOW: Stunning uprated Beezer at Copdock years ago

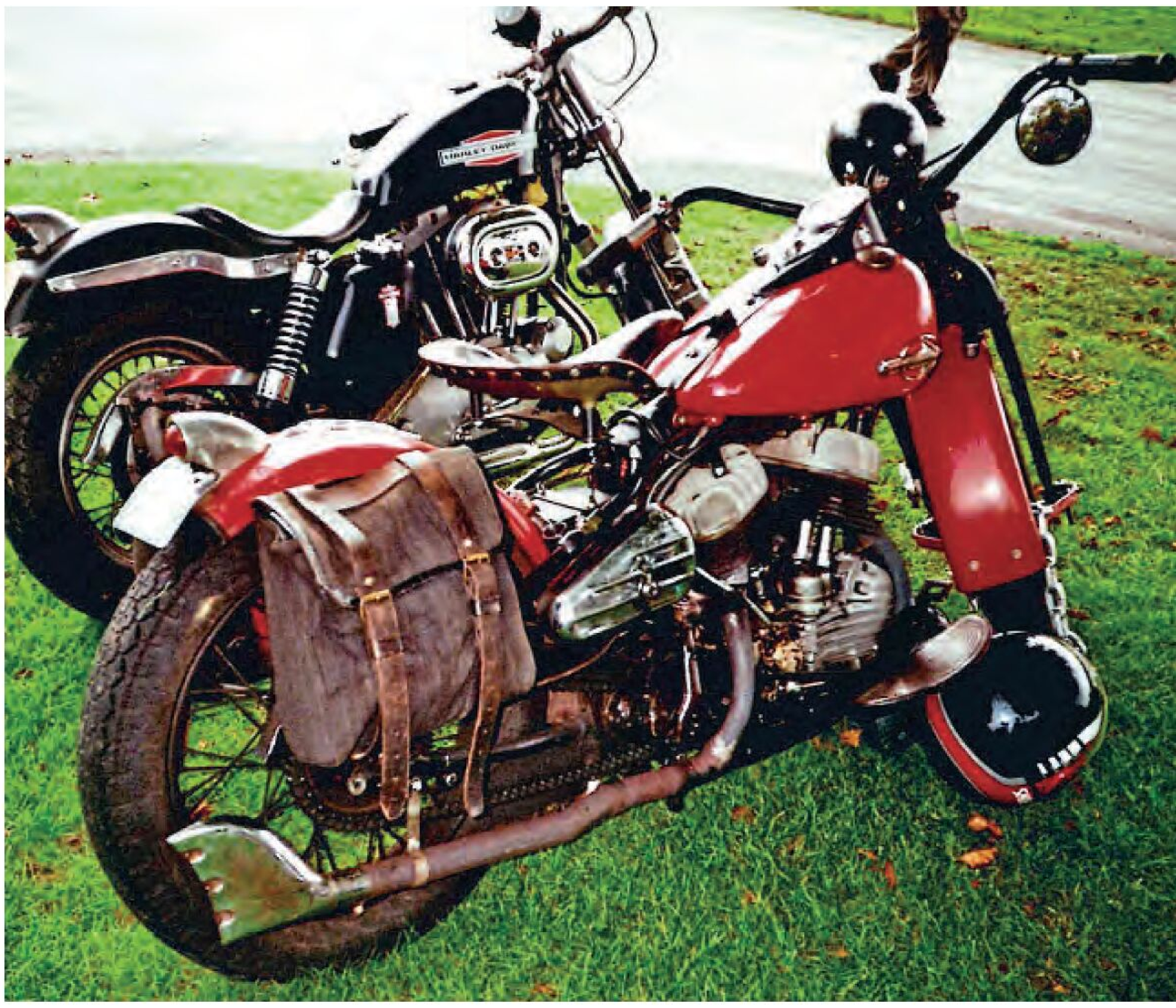
RIGHT: Contrasting Sporty – satin black and bright white!

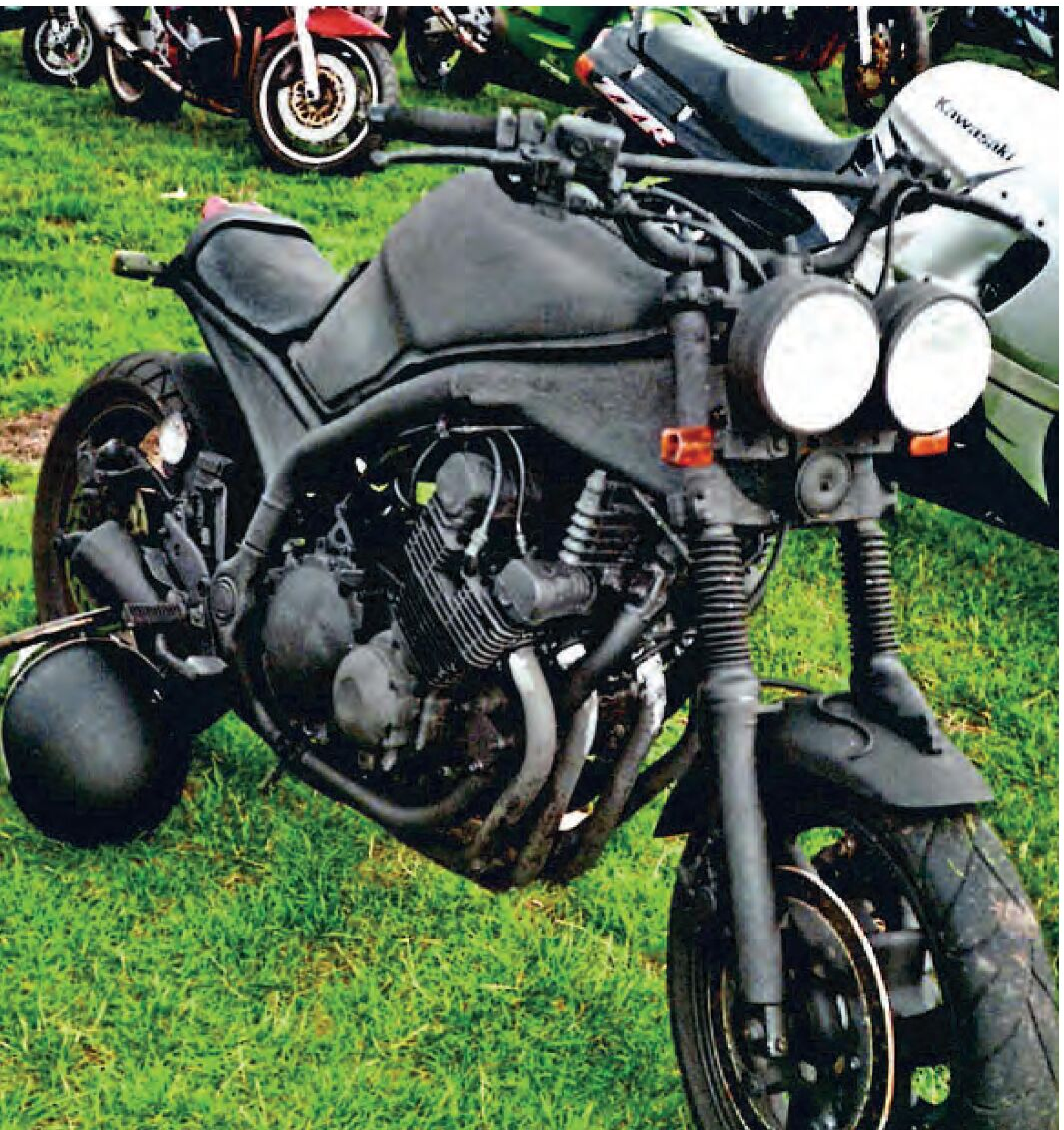




Gibby ~~Readers'~~ Lives







MIDDLE LEFT: Inconvenient side-stand that, innit, even on a digger…

LEFT: Tough rat Fazer – shame about the stick-on rat though

ABOVE: Lovely stock(ish) Flattie

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Motorcycle Action Group

Many years ago, Easyriders magazine ran a blank page as a protest about Harley's refusal to advertise in its pages. Every issue since the Year Dot'd given acres of space to promoting H-D, but the grey suits in charge of AMF, its then parent corporation, balked at the idea of consorting with what they deemed the unacceptable face of motorcycling.

Following the management buy-out of the early 1980s, however, Harley got itself a new management who themselves got where Harley needed to position itself. Out went the ugly 1970s styling and unreliability, and in came new ranges, and through the roof went the sales. Whereas they'd historically eschewed the custom-look fraternity, it finally embraced it, with models like the Springer Softail, and it's kept them coming ever since. At the same time, eventually they had the good sense to acknowledge its constituency by advertising in the kind of magazines from which it'd previously distanced itself. Likewise, they had the good sense to be friendly to the Riders' Rights movement in Europe, providing a Buell to Simon Milward when he was FEMA's General Secretary back in the 1990s. Sad to say, though, that its lead hasn't been much followed by other manufacturers.

Triumph was helpful, to a degree, in the late '90s and early 2000s, when it realised that the threat of a 100bhp limit posed a serious threat to its business, and spasmodically other manufacturers and importers've helped us but, overall, the support we've had had been weak, unreliable, and grudging. Further down the line from the manufacturers and importers, it's been the same story with retailers. Some were always brilliant – in my own stamping ground around West Yorkshire, bike shop owners like Bob Wylde and the Cork brothers (who originally traded as Kidson and later as Wooster's), in Leeds, Pete Smith in Pontefract, Castle Motorcycles in Castleford, and others, never hesitated to give us wall space to advertise runs and rallies, local group meetings, and national demos. Sadly, though, there were others, who I shall do the favour of not naming, who'd never give us the steam off their proverbial, let alone a bit of space to display a poster. It's always been a source of amazement to me that supposedly smart business people could be so short-sighted. In the Riders' Rights movement generally, and MAG most of all, they've had a self-financing volunteer army who've flogged their guts out for a half-century to keep motorcycling alive, but the general attitude could be summed up as, 'If it doesn't put money in the till in the next five minutes, we're not interested.'

Even worse, when bike theft was epidemic in the early 1990s, one luminary of the industry remarked to me, in all seriousness: "It's not a problem for us. On the contrary, if somebody gets their bike stolen, the insurance pays out, and we get to sell them another bike." Again, the short-sightedness was suicidal. The way that one played out was that insurance premiums increased and, far from resulting in more sales, bike theft, as we'd predicted, ended up being a sales-reducer.

A few industry bosses did listen. One major importer invited me, along with Allen Burton who was MAG's public relations officer at the time, to their UK headquarters and asked us outright: "What can we do to sell more motorcycles?" We gave them a bunch of ideas around advertising slogans, one being that they should promote motorcycles as 'rapid access vehicles', to emphasise how bikes could cut through traffic congestion. Okay, it might not have got us a job on Madison Avenue, but it was a helluva lot better than the insipid tag of 'powered two-wheeler' which the MCIA eventually fastened on in its desperation to avoid using the words 'motorbike' or 'motorcycle'. I was at their NEC presentation when they trotted out that little gem. I couldn't believe it. 'You don't sell the sausage, you sell the sizzle' is a fundamental tenet of advertising anything, but it's one that's always escaped the MCIA.

One idea we gave, though, did make it into metal, which was for a whole genre of motorcycle that's since sold thousands for every manufacturer. I won't name the company who led with it, or the executive involved, or even the genre of motorcycle. Work it out for yourselves. We were more than happy for him to have the credit and, thirty years on I'm still happy to keep his secret. Career-wise, it did him a lot of good, and there're a lot of people riding around today and paying a lot less for their insurance than if we'd not made that trip.

The MCIA, though, continues trying to appease the Government, giving away concessions for no reward. Obviously, it's learned nothing from the last forty years of continuing and accelerating decline. The real problem is lack of commitment – a series of MCIA bosses have come and gone, all of them possessed of minimal motivation; all of them at or near the end of their careers; all of them deluded that, when it came to the Government, they could ass-kiss their way to success – all of them finding out, one after the other, that it wouldn't work. It could all've been so different. If I'd run the MCIA, I'd have talked all its members into giving away a free first year's MAG membership with every bike sold. Sure, I'd also have asked for a seat on the MAG Board, and MAG would've given it, I know for a fact, because I'd have made sure it did. With a well-financed grassroots pressure group possessed of the motivation that's always been MAG's greatest asset, there's nothing we couldn't have achieved but, sadly, they've never had the vision... but what do I know? Except how to run a successful business, and that the most precious asset any business has is goodwill.

NEIL F. LIVERSIDGE
MAG NATIONAL CHAIRMAN

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devil's advocate

/dev.əlz ’æd.və.kət/

> *A person who expresses an opinion that disagrees with others so that there'll be an interesting discussion about an issue – teachers often play devil's advocate to provoke discussion in the classroom.*

IF SOMEONE'S GOING TO THROW THEMSELVES IN AT THE DEEP END WITHOUT FIRST LEARNING TO SWIM, THERE'S A VERY GOOD CHANCE THEY'RE GOING TO DROWN.

IN a time long ago, well before Amazon Prime and Deliveroo, people wanting to ride motorcycles tended to pass their test at the earliest available opportunity. If you successfully avoided running the examiner over during the emergency stop procedure then, chances were, although sometimes begrudgingly, he'd give you a full licence.

In your late teens, purchasing power was usually quite limited – a problem compounded by Richard Turpin having been appointed by the insurance industry to set premiums back in the day. Nevertheless, you bought what you could, and proceeded to ride it at every opportunity, and for any reason at all. Of course, you were no stranger to two wheels having spent some time range-bound by L-plates, but your newly-acquired cubic capacity broadened your horizons considerably.

Your bike was no toy or plaything though, it was a genuine means of transport and, most likely, your sole means of transport, weekdays and weekends in the sun, rain, hail, and snow… Of course, when it was really cold you did put an extra T-shirt on though. As time went by, bikes came and bikes went; larger, faster, and more powerful. A 550 replaced your 350. A 650 followed, then maybe a 900 and, finally, an 1100 sat on the road outside your house alongside the abandoned projects and 'one day' fantasies you'd acquired along the way.

If you're 45-plus and none of that sounds at all familiar, then I'm going to guess that you perhaps came to bikes later in life, and possibly via the direct access licence route? If that's the case, then I'd like to offer you my sincere congratulations on still being here. Why so? Well, simply because from what I've seen, many of your peers who also took that path, and so can't ride for shit, perhaps in part because they've never ridden shit? Clocking up the miles on a bike with a hinge in the middle, dubious tyres, and suspect brakes that made 60mph feel like 90 taught you things that ABS, traction control and assisted clutches never can. Personally, I consider good tyres, decent brakes and adequate lighting to be 'rider aids', whereas electronic acronyms are simply skill compensators designed to falsely flatter and provide a pseudo sense of 'safety'.

It seems some harbour a belief that technological advancement's greatly reduced the requirement for personal responsibility, yet bikes're just as dangerous now as they ever were – trust me, the outcome of hitting 44 tonnes of articulated lorry at 50mph'll be just the same in 2024 as it was in 1989, and no amount of sensors, gyroscopes and digital displays're going to alter that fact… or make it hurt any less.

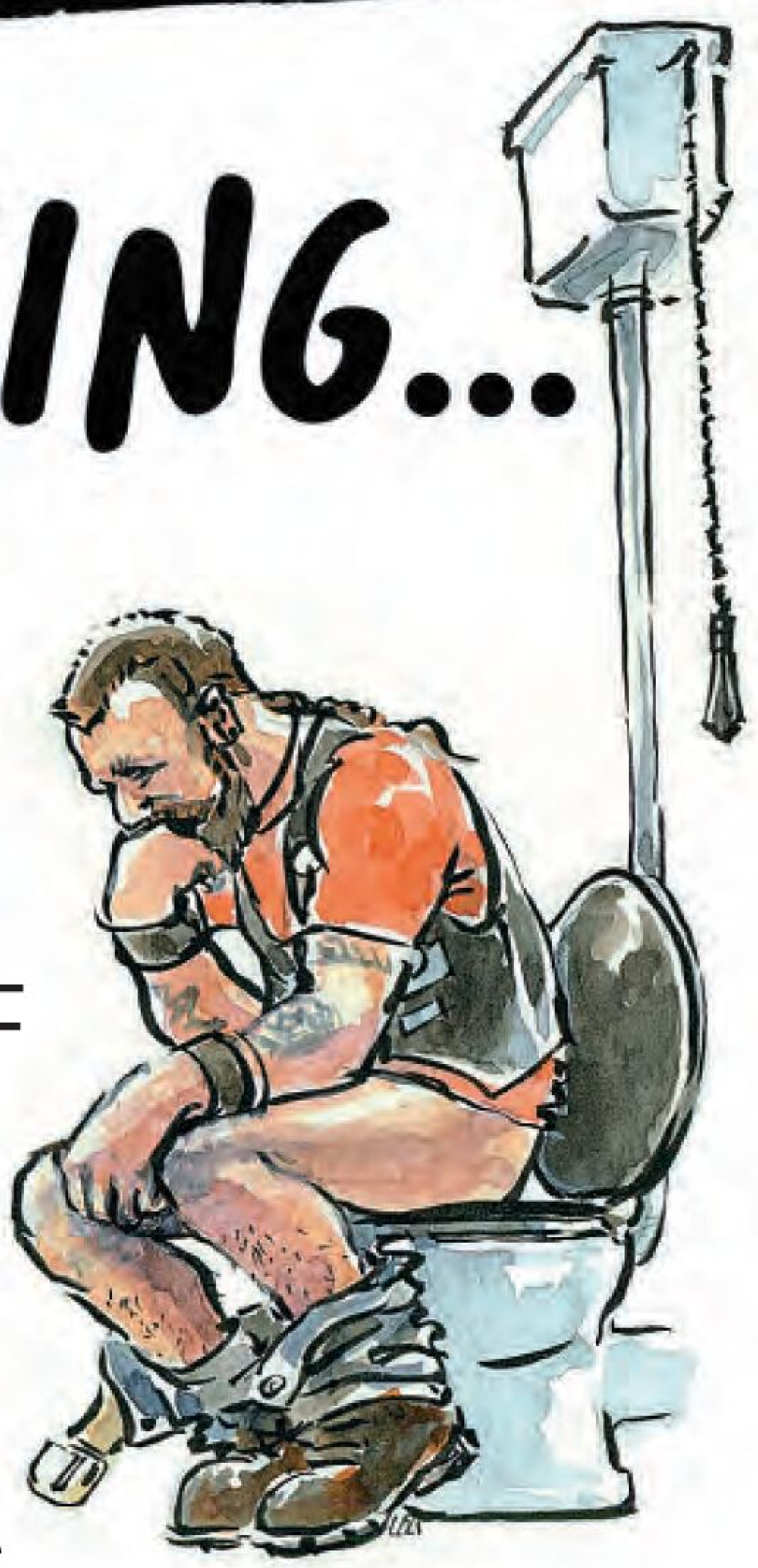
If your bike's more toy than transport, and spends the majority of its time parked cosily in the garage between your golf clubs and paddleboard then, realistically, just how many miles're you going to ride in a year? Three hours every second Sunday, plus the odd bike night, doesn't really equate to much over the course of 12 months, does it? If you factor in the weather, and the likelihood of it being inclement, then you can probably half the amount of available riding opportunities, and thus the amount of accumulated experience gathered. Do people still ride at night?

I know all that might sound harsh, and maybe it is, but having increasingly witnessed roadcraft that ranges from truly laughable to simply terrifying, I offer no apologies. However, it'd seem unfair to lay the blame in its entirety at the feet of the rider. I can't help feeling that the motorcycle industry, in all its forms, has helped to reshape habits and alter perceptions; if I had a pound for each person that's tried to tell me that a modern 650 is a beginner's bike and lacking in power, then I'd have a tenner. Do they not realise that any bike'll feel underwhelming if you insist on riding it as though you're driving a car; changing gear at 3000rpm, and never allowing the tacho' needle to swing above five grand? Do they not know that people've lapped the TT course at over 100mph with less brake horsepower?

I'm sure in 1997 someone, somewhere, had every good intention when they rubber-stamped the motorcycle licence reforms, but has it ultimately backfired? The thinking was that it'd help prevent spotty youths from clambering aboard high-powered bikes having only ever ridden a 125cc machine, but it turns out that, in reality, it simply allows those with deep enough pockets and a week off work to gain a full and unconditional licence having never ridden anything at all, not even a 125… I never once imagined that I'd be more wary of meeting other riders on the road than I would be of cars, yet here we are…

NORM

REMINISCING...



TESTING TIMES

IT WAS, AND STILL IS, A RITE OF PASSAGE – THE TEST!

It's very different now, of course, with a theory test administered by computer, C.B.T., an off-road manoeuvrability test, and walkie talkies to listen to the examiner following on his 'bike, but some of you'll remember that, in the dim and distant past of another century, it was so much simpler.

The car test was always a bit of a lucky dip, and if you failed it you could still hold your head up in public the next day (unless, of course, you failed it multiple times), but the bike test was so easy that only a total wazzock could fail (and even then you had to be really, REALLY useless). Allegedly it wasn't hard, said those know-it-alls who'd sailed through; just turn up on a bike that looked like it could at least be barely legal/didn't leave a deep pool of oil where it was parked/cover the examiner in a cloud of black exhaust as you set off. You'd just turn up at the test centre, show your licence, read a number-plate (hopefully one of the twenty of so on the cars parked outside you'd tried to memorise earlier), and mount up ready to follow instructions. All you had to do was try not to be too much of a Flash Harry/rev the nuts off it/attempt to pull a wheelie on your ex-Post Office Bantam. The examiner'd ask you to do something like take the second or third road on the left, or right, and continue round a block of about half-a-mile on each side. This route'd normally take in various hazards, like traffic lights, pedestrian crossings, roundabouts, busy high streets, or some other places difficult to negotiate without transgressing any motoring laws.

You'd quite happily move off smoothly, having looked behind and waved your arms to signal as if trying to take flight, and repeated the look and the arm waving again until you'd rounded the first corner, after which you wouldn't bother until returning into sight of the test centre. Then, on your return you'd be asked to carry out a similar journey around another block, or even in the reverse direction.

These seemingly simple instructions'd often lead to over-confidence, and therefore failure, as, unbeknownst to many spotty adolescent Hailwood wannabees, there were two major factors working against them. Firstly the examiners knew to within a fraction of a second exactly how long it'd take to complete the course without exceeding the posted speed limit and, secondly, these routes were carefully chosen so that the examiners could often cut through an alley or side road and intercept your route further along before you arrived, making it easy to observe your naughty riding when you thought no one was looking. There was one last thing that resulted in more failures than anything else – the dreaded emergency-stop. The instructions were simply to take another trip around the block and, at some point, the examiner'd unexpectedly step out from behind a parked car, holding up his clipboard, at which point you had to bring the bike to a controlled safe stop, 'as if in an emergency.' Doesn't sound too difficult, does it? Just remember that, back in the day, bikes didn't have disc brakes (until the very late Sixties… and most of those were useless in the wet) – most small bikes had poxy little drum brakes that were less effective than praying to your chosen deity to stop you. Add to that the fact that those of us who actually bothered to adjust chains regularly didn't always get the wheel alignment spot on either, to say nothing of the momentary confusion caused by some bloke suddenly appearing from behind a parked van holding his arm up.

The resulting carnage could've been much, much worse but, because of the slow speeds involved, and the lightness of the small bikes, usually resulted in nothing more serious than you dropping it at the end of a series of swerves. Occasionally the examiners, whom experience'd taught to be very nimble, would have to gracefully move out of harm's way with an elegance that befitted a bullfighter but, other than a few scuff marks to bike and rider, a failure slip was the worst that could happen… unless you were on a scooter. While instances where some totally innocent rider on a similar bike, wearing a similar jacket and/or helmet to the one on test, was suddenly confronted by a respectable-looking maniac in a suit stepping out in front of him with a hand raised as if to throw a clipboard in their face were rare, the most common emergency stop casualties were caused by scooter riders, most of whom had worse brakes than even the bikes, being mistaken for those on test – most young scooterists covered their mounts in mirrors and lights, and wore identical green parkas, so the examiners had, at best, a fifty-fifty chance of leaping out in front of the wrong scooterist.

Finally, when they asked you the Highway Code questions, you had to not look blank and reply: "Wot's 'at then?" Don't laugh – it really did happen…

In my own case, after being told I'd passed, the examiner said that, as I was clearly a safe and experienced rider, he'd let me off overtaking a bus by going well over the white line, and almost certainly exceeding the limit. I was totally puzzled as to how he could've witnessed this transgression, which took place at the extreme end of the route, and yet be back at the test centre for my return – it wasn't until some years later I was informed of the alley trick. Also I think he was lenient because, apart from turning up on a nice clean Japanese bike, I'd tucked my shoulder-length hair under my helmet (which wasn't compulsory then) and not worn the black jacket with the badly-drawn skull and crossbones on the back.

LAURIE

RICK HULSE

THE CLANSMAN HOTEL PLAYS HOST TO COACH TRIPS FROM THE INVERGORDON CRUISE TERMINAL ON THE CROMARTY FIRTH, JUST 35 MILES AWAY BY ROAD. TO CAPITALISE ON THIS TRADE, THEY HAVE A LARGE GIFT/ SOUVENIR/TAT SHOP ON ONE SIDE OF THE FOYER, AND A LOCAL ARTIST FLOGGING HIS MCCOOESQUE PAINTINGS ON THE OTHER SIDE.

NC500 2024 (PART 6)

AS I packed the luggage on to the trike (using finely-honed skills gained from playing a lot of Tetris), a coach full of cruise ship tourists arrived, so Mandy dashed off to the shop to get a souvenir Nessie before the rush. The coach spewed out a loud and poorly attired group, instantly recognisable as Americans, and as they bustled past me toward the entrance, I put my head down and ignored their comments of, “My, that’s a good-looking modasikal!” and “That’s a nice Harley you got there!” Stoically, I resisted the urge to correct their poor diction, or to point out the word ‘Yamaha’ plainly visible on the tank. I had to retrieve Mandy from the shop, where she was suffering Nessie blindness due to there being hundreds of the buggers to choose from. “Please, just pick one of the f**kers – I’m sweating my tits off in all this gear, and Yanks’re talking at me!” Five minutes later we roared out of the car park with a little fluffy Nessie secured to the top of our luggage.

****

We decided to stick to the A82, through The Great Glen and across the Grampian Mountains all the way to Glasgow. This route offered us fabulous scenery, but we knew it would be a long journey to Carlisle. First, we traversed the length of Loch Ness (it’s an impressively huge piece of water), then we went along the western bank of Loch Oich (‘Loch Oik’ obviously), past the ruins of Invergarry Castle, then along the eastern bank of the wildly beautiful Loch Locky (which we renamed ‘Lochy MacLoch Face), and on across the foot of the ever-impressive Ben Nevis, the UK’s highest mountain.

Fort William, though picturesque in the bright noon sun, proved to be a bitch of a place to get through – campervans bumbling along at 15mph, causing huge tailbacks, in their ignorant quest to sightsee without actually stopping. After travelling just one mile in over 15 minutes my patience ran out, and I decided to negotiate the three-mile tailback ‘creatively’. Admittedly, this involved a certain amount of aggressive overtaking (and the occasional misuse of pavements… look, cyclists do it all the time), but once past the snail-trail of c**ts in campervans, we had a lovely open road ahead of us, and a combined “Wheeeeeee!” of joy graced our helmet intercoms as we roared along the eastern bank of Loch Linnhe.

I slowed down a bit as we began to cross the impressive 294-metre continuous-beam span of the Ballachulish Bridge, which crosses the narrows between Loch Linnhe and Loch Leven nestled in the spectacular Grampian Mountains. Trying to absorb the awesome beauty of it all required a level of cerebral expansion that just isn’t available at 75mph. The name of the Grampians’s derived from the term ‘Mons Graupius’, used by the Roman historian Tacitus when describing the battle between the Romans under General Agricola and the Caledonians who stood up to Roman pillaging in 83CE and, as ‘Mons Graupius’ translates to ‘Humpy Mountains’, that suggests Tacitus never actually saw them. Even a professional bullshit artist like Tacitus’d surely’ve come up with a better description of the Grampians if he’d witnessed their grandeur?

Next came the rather lovely village of Glencoe and, from then on, ‘stunning’ doesn’t come close to describing the magnificence and awe-inspiring nature of the landscape we travelled through over the next 75 miles which, due to stopping for lunch and fuel at The Green Welly Stop near Tyndrum, then hitting heavy traffic along the western back of Loch Lomond, took more than three hours.

Eventually we got through Glasgow, and found the A74M at about the same time as the torrential rain found us. Still, we were out of the city, and I was able to open the throttle a bit.

We were both feeling the fatigue of six hours in the saddle when we pulled in at Abington Services for fuel and a brew (what an utter shithole that proved to be) but, as soon as we were able, we got back on the road and were soon cruising past Lockerbie (where it was pissing down with rain as it always seems to be), then Gretna, and on to the M6 into England. Finally we reached the Crown Hotel in Wetheral after 275 miles and almost eight hours in the saddle. We’d booked this spa hotel for our last night so we could soak away the aches and pains in a jacuzzi, and relax in the sauna and pool, before treating ourselves to a nice ‘last night meal’, but none of these materialised – the spa’d closed three hours earlier than advertised, and the restaurant was fully booked. The receptionist assured us, as residents, we’d get food in the bar but, unfortunately, the bar proved to be run by an ignorant and rude c**t who simply said: “There’s nothing I can do for you, we’re busy!” Had I been the intemperate man that I was in my youth, they’d’ve had a lot of glass to clean up. Eventually, we got a meal down in the village and the following morning, as we left, it took all of my self-control not to trash our room – this wasn’t the way we had envisaged our NC500 sojourn ending but, sadly, customer service’s becoming a thing of the past in England. I was still seething when we got back home to Manchester after an uneventful 140-mile trip down the M6 and M56.

****

Our holiday’d covered 1,268 miles over seven days, and we arrived home knackered and aching, but with a bucketful of happy memories (and not one midge bite), and we’re happy to recommend the NC500 (anti-clockwise) to anybody who appreciates a joyous and awe-inspiring holiday.

RICK HULSE

Next Month

BACK STREET HEROES

TRIUMPH SPEED 400 TEST

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- Lovely long-fork
- Glorious trike
- New blood Fazer

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FINNISH KULTURE
THUG BIKE SHOW
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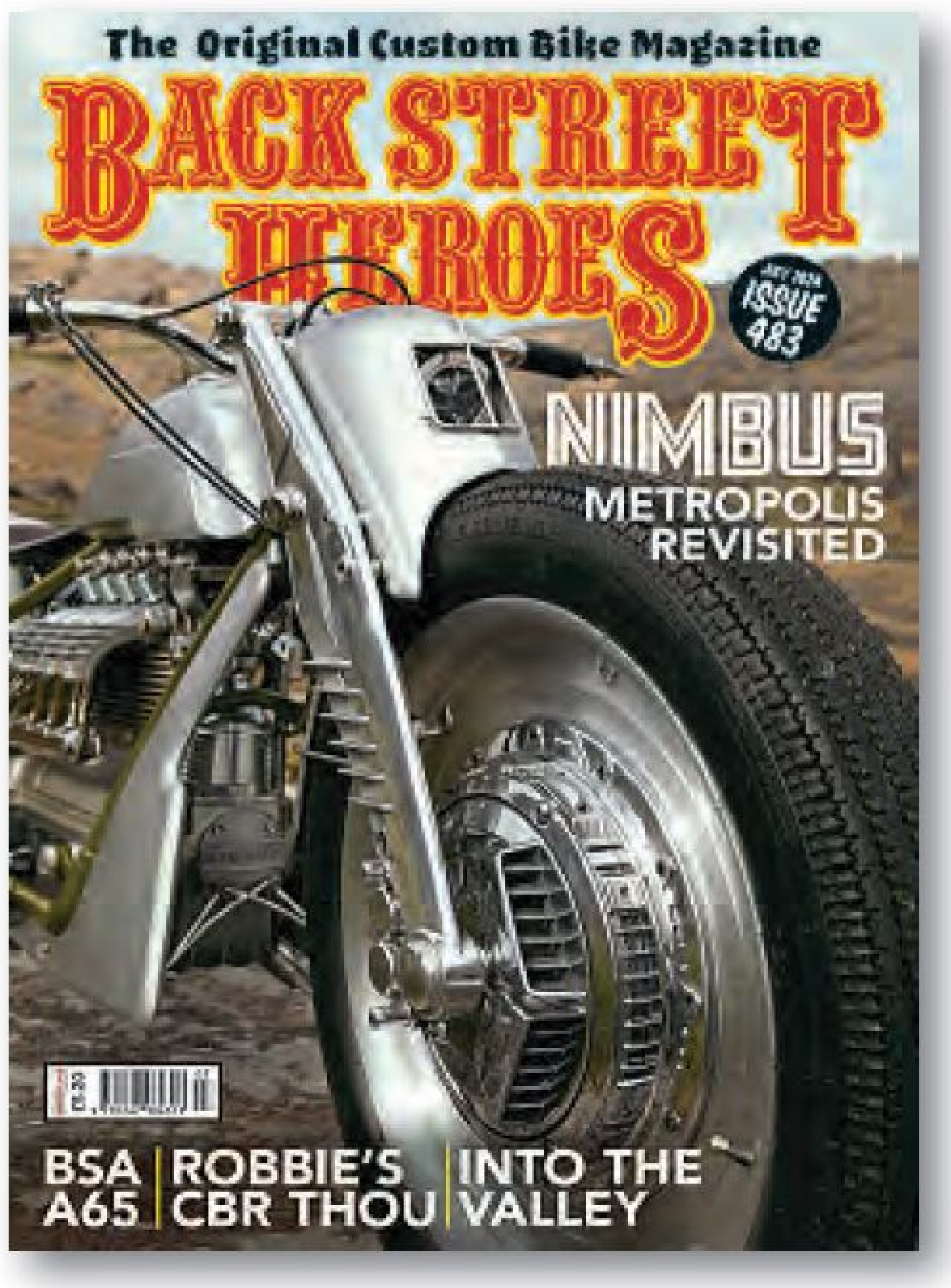
- Laverda an unlikely triple treat
- With a stylish Finnish
- Miller's custom classics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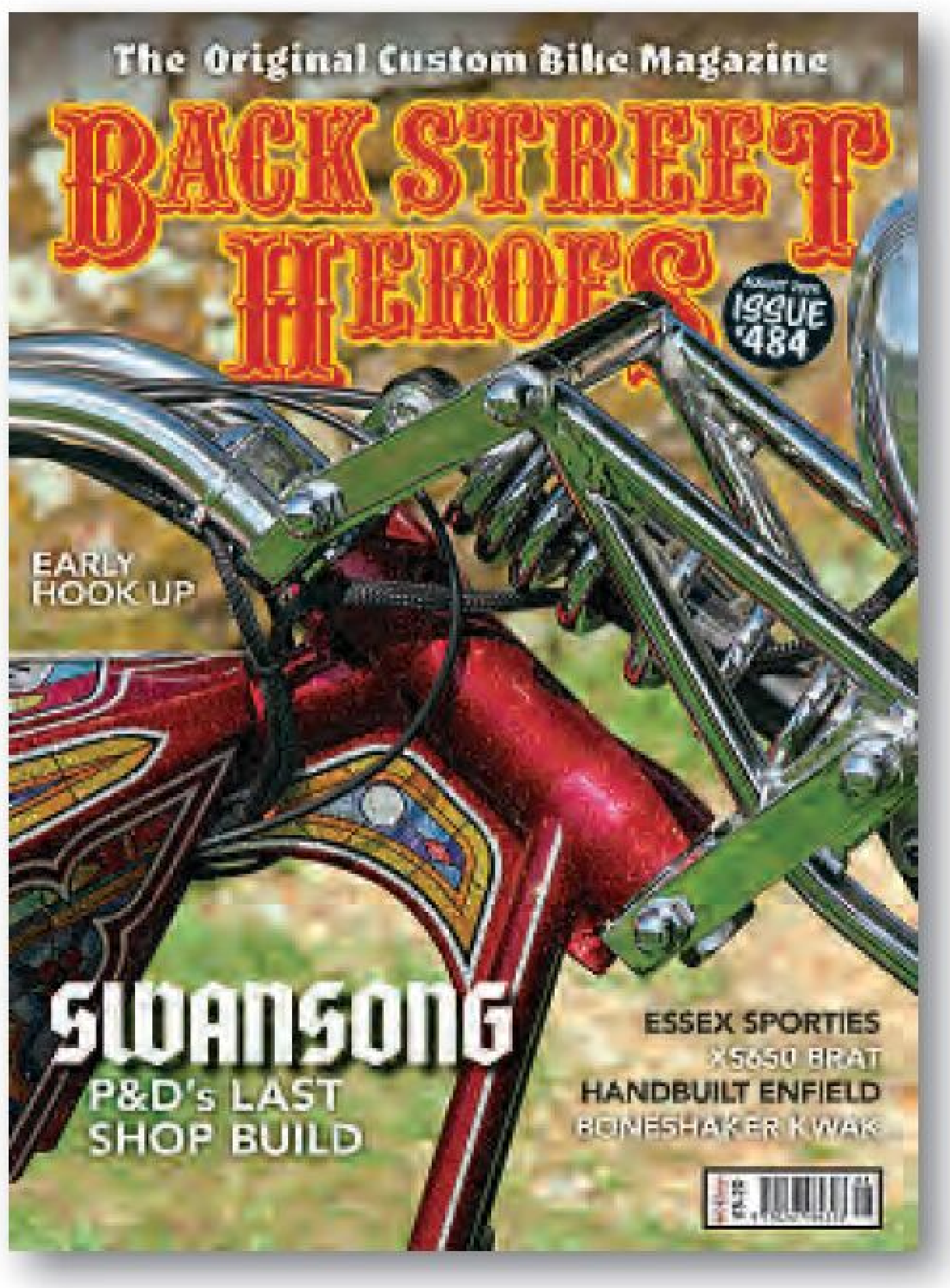
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P&D's LAST SHOP BUILD
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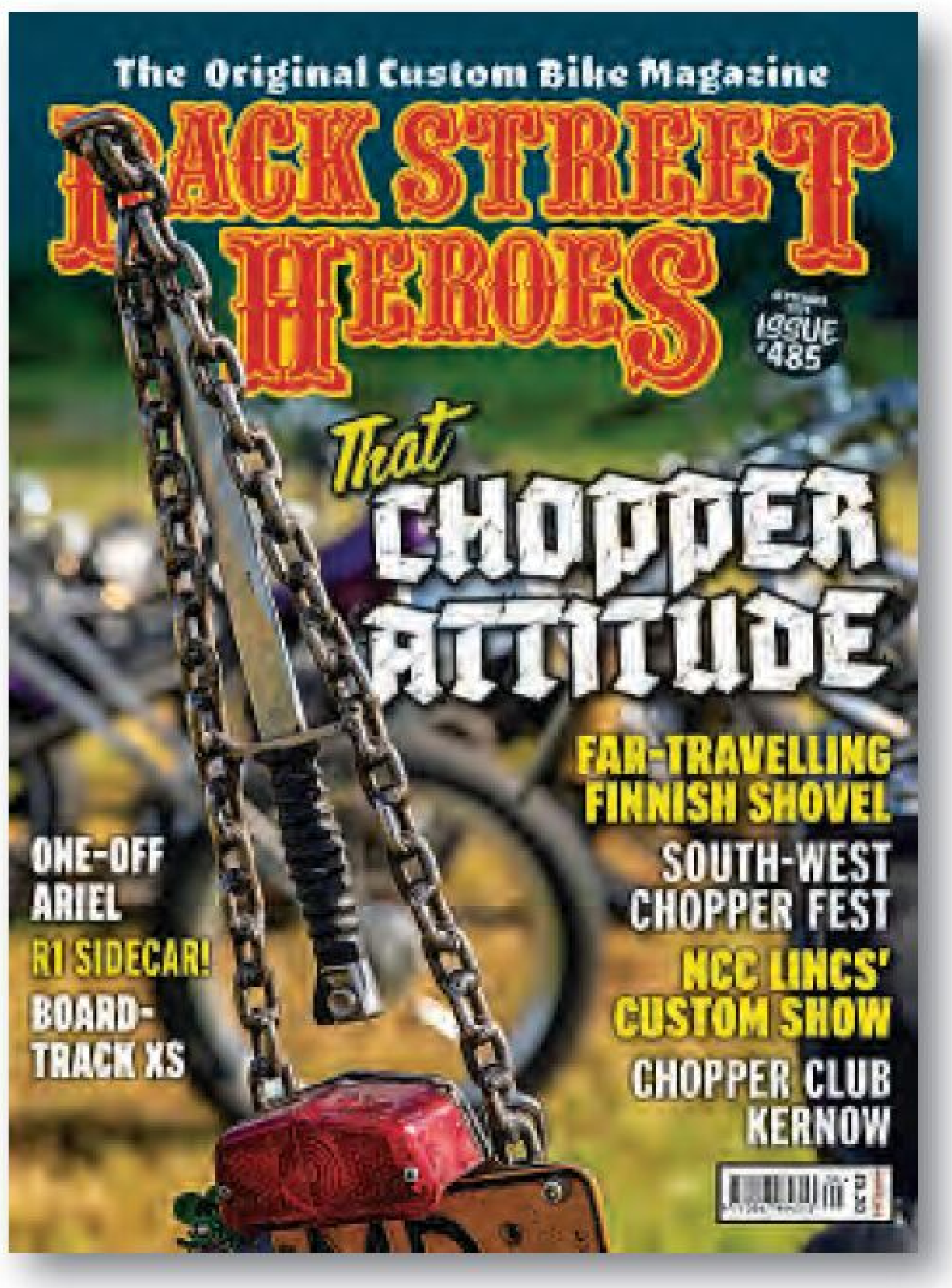
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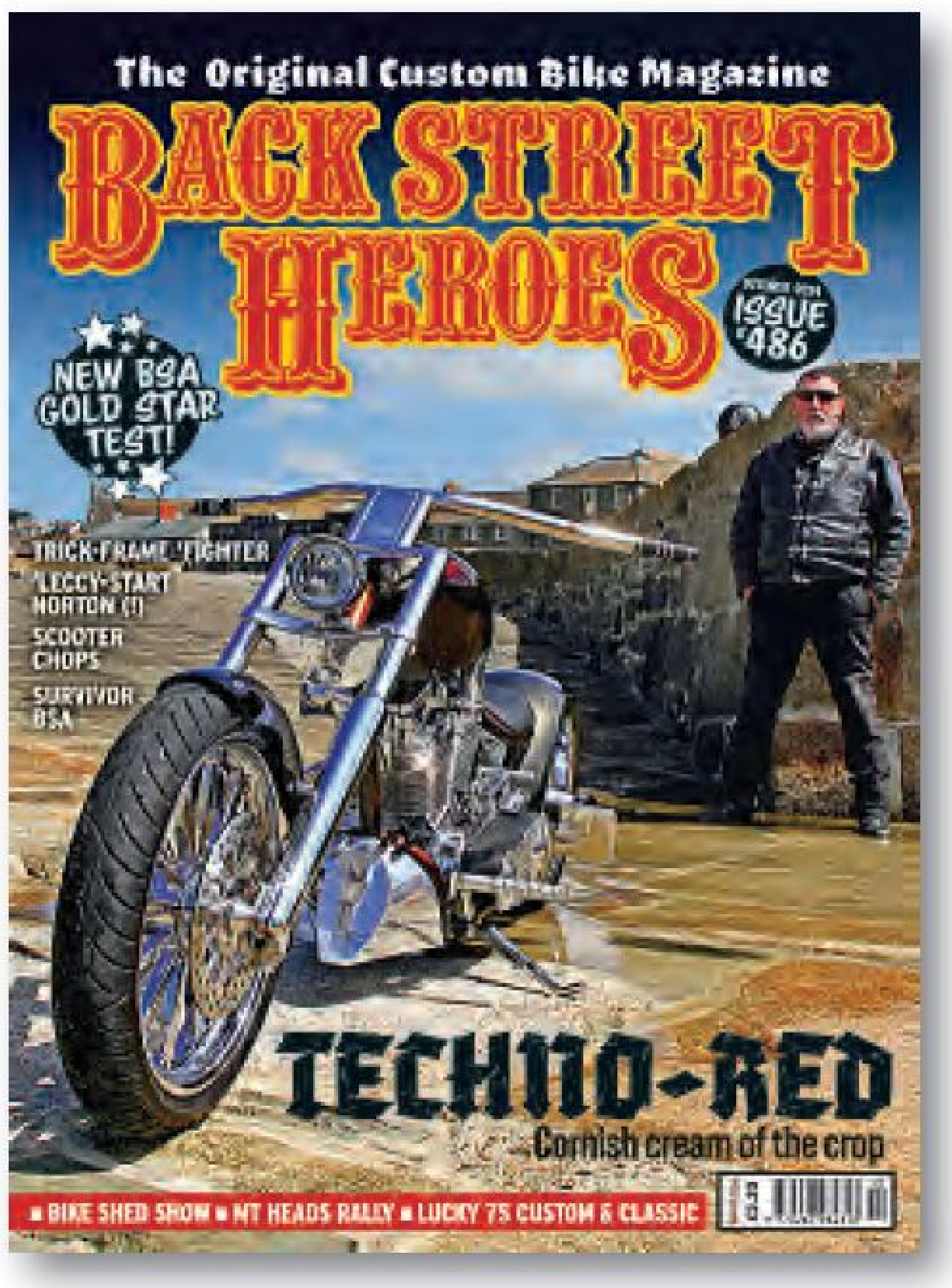
- Cool Finnish shovel
- Coffin-tanked Kwak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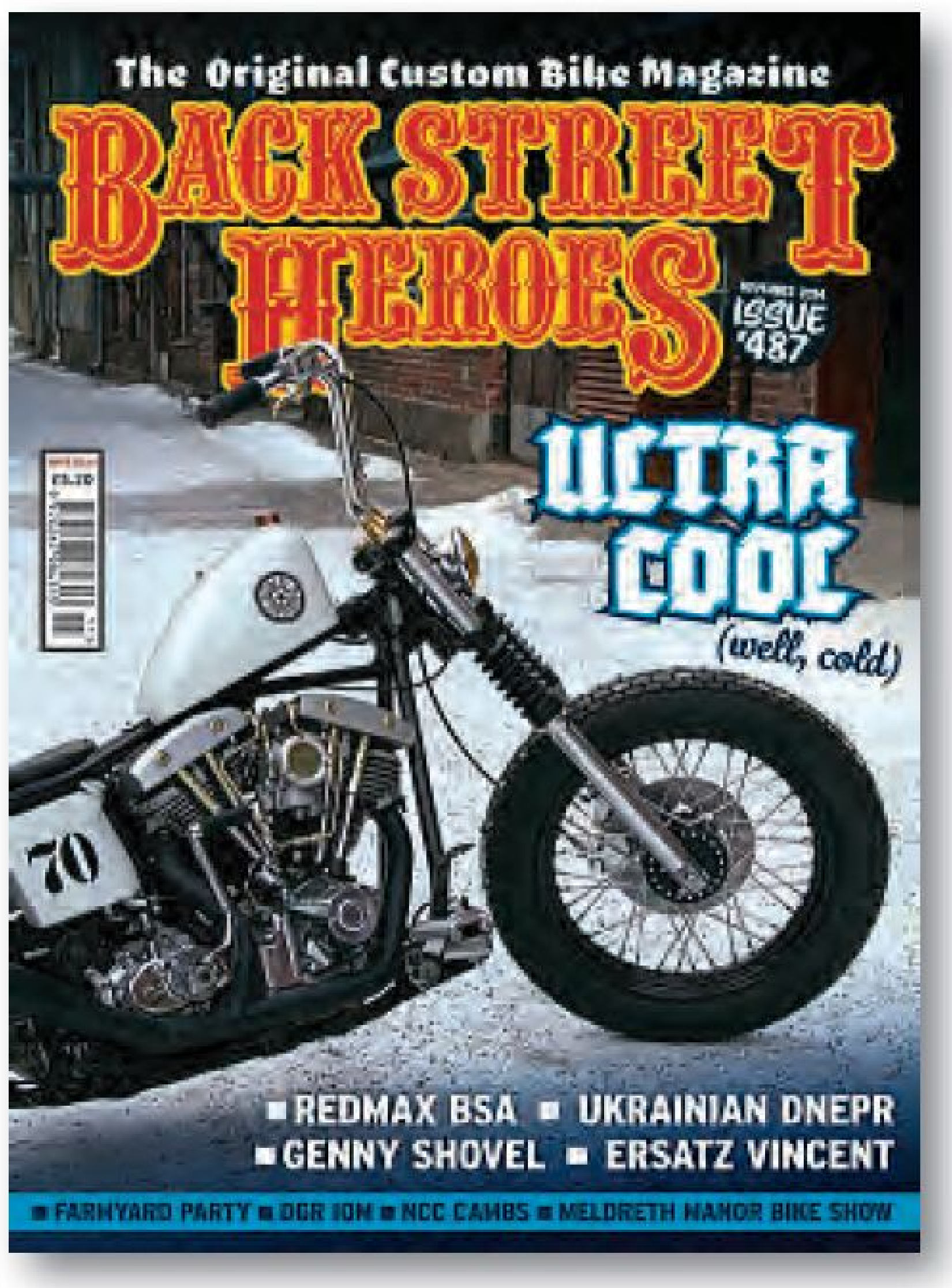
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November 2024
- Stunning Ukrainian chop
- Cool Generator Shovel
- If Vincent was here

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STAFFORD
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